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EZEKIEL REDIK YARBROUGH

Exegesis Umbrae – Decursus
Falsitatis – Project AngelBook –
Volume XIII – Part 3
By Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough
(DBM ECLIPZE)

Liminal Archivist's Note

On the Preservation of Distorted Gnosis and the Dying Digital Veil

There is a strange ache that comes from spending all day in the ruins of spiritual memory.

Fifty books made in one day—an inhuman output—should feel like a triumph. But when the source material is splintered, hostile, and drenched in egoic inversion, what remains is not pride... but hollowness.

This volume, like many in this phase, is not composed of my own words.

It is an act of preservation, not expression.

It is a documentation of liminal knowledge, scraped from a dying web—the final breath of spiritual forums, parapsychology ephemera, early occultist blogs, and yes, even the darker corridors of modern satanic movements.

And herein lies the tension:

Much of what is presented under the name Satanism is a distorted half-truth.

It correctly identifies that Yahweh is not the Most High, and in this way, it mirrors certain Gnostic insights—

but then it derails into ego exaltation, materialism, and psychic hostility. It gets halfway to freedom... and then builds a new prison out of flame and shadow.

And yet—

amidst the mockery, venom, and inversions,

there are real spiritual technologies embedded in the code.

Meditation techniques, psychic development maps, astral awareness, breath control, and ritual frameworks.

Not all of it is corrupted.

Some of it is usable tech.

Some of it may be ancient... wearing a new mask.

So I do not endorse what is preserved here.

But I also refuse to let it vanish into untraceable digital decay.

This is an act of containment as much as curation.

I name this phase liminal, because I know it will not last.

There is only so much of the old internet left to preserve.

Only so much unindexed gnosis hiding behind broken blog links and .org forums that haven't been cached since 2012.

When this phase ends, and I return to creation, I will draw from this tomb of fragments with clarity and discernment.

But for now, I am the one who stands in the gateway—

Archiving the bones, sealing the jars, lighting one gold-lettered candle above a chamber of shadows.

To the reader: proceed with awareness.

This is not scripture.

This is sediment.

It is archived because it is dangerous.

And dangerous knowledge, when preserved with respect, often becomes a mirror for deeper truth.

—Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough

Liminal Phase – Discretio Luminis

After my Christian deconversion, I found that the Atheist paradigm didn't have the answers to life's mysteries or even to unexplained phenomena either. I knew that its paradigm was insufficient as well. Neither Atheism nor Evangelical Christianity seemed adequate, but oddly enough many people seem to think that those are the only two belief systems to choose from. Realizing that there were way too many things that couldn't be explained by conventional or scientific explanations, I started looking for answers in non-organized forms of spirituality. After further research and questioning, I discovered many fascinating things and new paradigms that fit the unexplained data, which gave me a more comprehensive view of reality and spirituality. I discovered that there was indeed powerful evidence (some of which is irrefutable) that some paranormal phenomena are genuine and do have a basis, both scientifically and in terms of anecdotal evidence.

To try to gain an understanding of the other side of the issue, (which is what you should do when you want to learn something in depth) I went to skeptics to ask what they had to say and also read some of their literature. I found that what they had to say made sense on the surface, but was very different than what I heard from the literature about paranormal phenomena, accounts of paranormal experiences from ordinary people (some of which I know and trust), and my own experiences. In order to try to make sense of such different but arguable views, I tried to sift through the details and the evidence. What I found was that although both skeptics and believers can be closed-minded and tend to rationalize away what they don't want to believe, in either case the objective evidence for some of the paranormal was incredibly strong and undeniable.

As I became more educated and informed of the evidence for different types of paranormal phenomena, I presented this to skeptics both on message boards and internet newsgroups. What resulted was an endless charade of arguments on both sides, with each side bringing up facts that support their side while denying the facts of the other side. This is typical of debates in general, no doubt, but since there were so many types of paranormal phenomena, the topic range was broad and diverse enough to make continuous and interesting discussions. Consequently, the discussions dragged on much longer than expected. Not only were there so many topics to discuss, but I kept finding more and more quality evidence to support my view each time I looked. All this became a fascinating exercise in the quest for truth.

During the discussions and debates, I was led to skeptical material such as Professor Bob Carroll's *The Skeptic's Dictionary*, editions of *Skeptical Inquirer* (published by CSICOP), articles by the infamous paranormal debunker James Randi, and others.

Over time, I developed a strong recognition and grasp of their system of philosophical arguments and sensed the patterns in them. After hearing almost all the arguments they used, I learned how to respond to them to the point of it being second nature to me. I knew their strengths and weaknesses, just as an experienced chess player understood the strengths and weaknesses of the positions of his opponent's pieces. For almost three years, I debated skeptics ranging from honest doubters looking for truth (like me), to those who were clearly cynics masquerading as skeptics having already made up their minds before looking at the evidence.

These skeptics included cynics, debunkers, Atheists, Humanists, certain scientists bent on materialistic reductionist world views, those for whom science is their God (even though they won't admit it), scientific materialists, haters of religion, etc. Now we call them "pseudoskeptics" because although they pose as skeptics, their skepticism is "pseudo" meaning "False or counterfeit; fake." (American Heritage Dictionary) Hence the title of this book.

Eventually, I realized that their skepticism was not about an open inquiry for truth, but rather a philosophy they used to manipulate data to fit their beliefs and reject anything outside of it on purely subjective grounds. This philosophy was pseudo-intellectual in nature and used to discredit and invalidate both claimants and evidence. Oddly, these skeptics seem to think that they can use semantics and rules from this philosophy to erase evidence from reality! They think that they can invalidate real-life objective events and evidence of a paranormal nature by putting labels on them or quoting some theorem or axiom such as "anecdotal evidence is invalid", "appeal to authority", "ad populum fallacy argument" etc. In effect, they attempt to use semantics to erase objective reality. Unfortunately for them, reality doesn't work that way.

It was obvious that these skeptics were not seeking the truth nor were they open to it. Instead, they were about systematically trying to debunk everything that didn't fit in with their a priori staunch materialistic views. Therefore, they did not ask questions of an exploratory nature, but rather, they taunted and attacked believers and made claims and judgments about their paranormal experiences. They had already made up their minds beforehand, and would only accept evidence that fit their conclusions. A true skeptic and truth-seeker analyzes both sides and updates his views and opinions to conform with the facts, while a pseudoskeptic on the other hand manipulates the facts to fit into their beliefs, using selective attention as well.

Then I suddenly realized at the time that no books or in-depth analyses have been

written to directly counter the arguments and philosophy of organized skeptics and debunkers. There were a few articles written about closed-minded skeptics in general, but no in-depth point by point critique or debunking of their arguments. For almost every other organized belief system, there are books written analyzing its precepts and doctrines, but not for organized skepticism. Therefore, I decided to be the first to write such a thing, making use of the knowledge I gained over the years and my debating skills. I felt that being the first in something was an accomplishment that I would be inspired to do. And that's how this book came to be written back in 2001.

When it was first released, it became widely acclaimed in the paranormal community as groundbreaking, effective and the first of its kind. It led to my appearance on several radio shows such as Forbidden Truth by my friend Michael Goodspeed, The Clyde Lewis Show (KOTK 1080 AM) in Portland, Oregon, and Ghostly Talk Radio (you can listen to that interview in the archive section of their website at www.ghostlytalk.com or on YouTube here). Later, due to widespread recognition, I was invited to an international conference as a guest speaker at the Mysteries of the World theme park in Switzerland, and to a public debate with skeptics in New York.

Of course, not surprisingly the skeptics later issued a piece to debunk this book. A skeptic named Paul Sandoval published his counter-piece to it, which you can download [here](#). As you can see from it, he simply does more of the same, twisting words into "logical fallacies", which anyone can do to anyone they disagree with, putting labels on things, and twisting semantics to his advantage, none of which disproves any of the facts, examples and evidence I cited, nor erases evidence for paranormal phenomena from existence. People who do this are "in their own world", so to speak. (To see a great example of word games from pseudoskeptics that have nothing to do with reality, see this online exchange I had with one in which he was proven to have lied several times beyond any shadow of doubt.)

Years later in 2009, I formed a coalition and website called SCEPCOP – Scientific Committee to Evaluate Pseudoskeptical Criticism of the Paranormal, which was the world's first organized counter-skeptic group created to counter CSICOP, JREF, etc. Although at this time SCEPCOP is in its infancy, its popularity has soared among the Paranormal community and received attention from the Skeptic camp as well. (See a list of paranormal websites and blogs announcing SCEPCOP [here](#)) And in August of 2009, the popular paranormal magazine Atlantis Rising did an article on SCEPCOP in issue 77, which you can download [here](#) in PDF format. (see pages 24, 26 and 61)

With the exception of sensational pro-paranormal programs, skeptics are often given the chance to present their arguments and explanations in the media, national magazines, and television programs, without rebuttal from the other side, even when their explanations are insufficient to explain all the data. As a result, there is often an imbalance in the presentation of paranormal and psychic phenomena in the media, leaving most viewers and believers uninformed. This book attempts to counteract the imbalance. It is written both for the education and knowledge of the believer who deals with skeptics, and for skeptics who are willing to hear counter-arguments to their positions.

Now let me clarify that I have nothing against honest true skepticism. It is good to have a healthy dose of skepticism to protect one from scams, con artists, misleading advertising, misleading claims, propaganda, brainwashing, jumping to conclusions, etc. But when closed-minded cynicism comes masquerading as skepticism, it becomes a block to truth finding and open-minded investigation. However, those new to this subject may not be able to discern the difference between open honest skepticism and closed-minded pseudoskepticism. Therefore, let us differentiate between the two.

PseudoSkeptics vs. True Skeptics: Behaviors and Tactics

According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, a skeptic is:

"One who is yet undecided as to what is true; one who is looking or inquiring for what is true; an inquirer after facts or reasons."

Pyrrho, the founder of "Skepticism", intended for it to be about open inquiry and suspension of judgment.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"In classical philosophy, skepticism refers to the teachings and the traits of the 'Skeptikoi', a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they 'asserted nothing but

only opined.' (Liddell and Scott) In this sense, philosophical skepticism, or Pyrrhonism, is the philosophical position that one should suspend judgment in investigations.[1]"

But rather than inquiring, or asking questions to try to understand something, they seek to debunk, discredit and ridicule anything that doesn't fit into their belief system. And rather than suspending judgment, they make accusations of fraud and delusion of all paranormal claimants. They are PROSECUTORS, not investigators. Hence, we call them pseudoskeptics (a term coined by the late Marcello Truzzi) for their actions and behaviors are the complete antithesis of what skepticism truly means.

According to WikiSynergy:

Pseudoskepticism (or pseudoskepticism) is defined as thinking that claims to be Skeptical but is actually faith-based disbelief. Because real skepticism is a justifiable position, pseudoskepticism may also be defined as making pseudoscientific arguments in pursuit of a skeptical agenda.

Pseudoskepticism is a general term which encompasses two types of faith-based disbelief: making positive claims that something is wrong or unreal without evidence (positive disbelief), and rejecting sufficient evidence.

A "true skeptic" objectively inquires and seeks evidence, challenging all sides including their own beliefs (see here). But these pseudoskeptics do anything but. As someone observed to me:

"The original definition of skeptic was a person who questions ALL beliefs, facts, and points-of-view. A healthy perspective in my opinion. Today's common definition of skeptic is someone who questions any belief that strays outside of the status quo, yet leaving the status quo itself completely unquestioned. Kind of a juvenile and intellectually lazy practice in my opinion."

Even Wikipedia indirectly admits that modern skepticism is really about rejecting new information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"The word skepticism can characterize a position on a single claim, but in scholastic circles more frequently describes a lasting mind-set and an approach to accepting or rejecting new information."

And this insightful YouTuber eloquently hit the bull's eye with this comment:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vks49Bfn544>

"What skeptics fail to understand is that skepticism involves being skeptical of your own position, it does not mean just being skeptical of that which you do not believe in, otherwise we are all skeptics and that renders their use of the term "skeptic" meaningless. A true skeptic casts skepticism on their own position as well. Since the Randi crowd do not employ skepticism in this respect then they are fairly termed pseudo skeptics and demean the term skepticism."

So, pseudoskeptics have hijacked the term "skeptic" to refer to the one who suppresses, rather than the one who "doubts or questions" which it is supposed to refer to. As such, a "skeptic" now refers to the ridiculer, debunker and discreditor of the "questioner" (who is the true skeptic) rather than to the questioner himself. In other words, the new "skeptic" is someone who debunks a "skeptic" by wearing the hat of the person they are out to debunk, in effect impersonating them! It's a highly deceptive form of role reversal that is very sneaky and devious, no doubt.

And furthermore, it seems way too calculated and militant to be due to some accidental misunderstanding, ignorance or closed mindedness. Hijacking a word to mean its opposite seems more like part of some sort of agenda, perhaps a deliberate disinformation campaign or cultural mind control. If that sounds terrible, well, we are here to expose that thank goodness.

In truth and by their actions, these pseudoskeptics are defenders of the status quo and materialism. They are fanatics and dogmatists who have no regard for facts, evidence or truth, but have an a priori faith-based belief that paranormal phenomena is impossible and therefore set out to debunk it, not investigate it. And they will distort, dismiss and obfuscate to get their way. Thus, they generally have no objectivity toward evidence, but bigotry and emotional fanaticism.

If you're wondering if this is true, then ask yourself this: Why do those who attack, ridicule and deny all paranormal claims also usually deny all conspiracies and facts in support of them, while dogmatically accepting all propaganda by the media and establishment? Have you ever seen a paranormal debunker like James Randi, Michael Shermer or CSICOP's Skeptical Inquirer challenge anything official held by the status quo at all, period? If not, what does that tell you? Think about it.

And that's what a "skeptic" is today in the media and pop culture. Obviously this means that their skepticism is highly selective and subjective, not distributed equally in all directions, hence an extreme bias exists in them rather than any form of objectivity. Skepticism should be a tool and method of inquiry to help one learn things and find truth, not be used as a cover to defend one's own rigid narrow views. Questioning things and seeking answers helps one learn things, but trying to debunk everything outside your world view doesn't.

Dean Radin, who spent many years studying parapsychology and skeptical views, concluded the same in his acclaimed book *Entangled Minds*: (pages 10-11)

"Some skeptics pushed doubt to extremes and insisted that positive evidence was always due to mistakes or intentional fraud. As I saw it, within this dialectic one side was struggling to understand the depths of inner space by probing Nature with clever questions. The other was trying to maintain the status quo through passionate, and sometimes vicious, denial. The former were willing to take risks to advance knowledge, the latter were naysayers interested mainly in defending dogma."

Chris Carter, author of *Parapsychology and the Skeptics*, accurately described the pseudoskeptics' true motivations in this interview:

<http://www.skeptiko.com/blog/?p=8>

"You have to remember that the argument is not really about the evidence. The argument is about their assumptions and their preconceptions. Their preconceptions are, with these sort of phenomena, that they don't make any sense and challenge their world view. So, they're going to do anything they possibly can to dismiss evidence that challenges their preconceptions."

The late great author Robert Anton Wilson observed the same regarding pseudoskeptics, calling them "fundamentalist materialists" and "irrational rationalists" in this interview:

http://www.nii.net/~obie/1988_interview.htm

"DAB: One of your recent books is *The New Inquisition: Irrational Rationalism and the Citadel of Science*. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about this book.

RAW: I coined the term irrational rationalism because those people claim to be rationalists, but they're governed by such a heavy body of taboos. They're so fearful, and so hostile, and so narrow, and frightened, and uptight and dogmatic. I thought it was a fascinating paradox: irrational rationalists. Later on I found out I didn't invent that. Somebody else who wrote an article on CSICOP, that's the group they all belong to: Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Somebody else who wrote about them also used the term irrational rationalism. It's a hard term to resist when you think about those people.

I wrote this book because I got tired satirizing fundamentalist Christianity, I had done enough of that in my other books. I decided to satirize fundamentalist materialism for a change, because the two are equally comical. All fundamentalism is comical, unless you believe in it, in which case you'd become a fanatic yourself, and want everybody else to share your fundamentalism. But if you're not a fundamentalist yourself, fundamentalists are the funniest people on the planet. The materialist fundamentalists are funnier than the Christian fundamentalists, because they think they're rational!

DAB: They call themselves skeptical.

RAW: Yes, but they're not skeptical! They're never skeptical about anything except the things they have a prejudice against. None of them ever says anything skeptical about the AMA, or about anything in establishment science or any entrenched dogma. They're only skeptical about new ideas that frighten them. They're actually dogmatically committed to what they were taught when they were in college, which was about 1948-53, somewhere in that period. If you go back and study what was being taught in college in those days as the latest scientific theories, you find out that's what these people still believe. They haven't had a new idea in 30 years, that's all that happened to them. They just rigidified, they crystallized around 1960."

As Wilson stated, these pseudoskeptics are fundamentalists on the opposite extreme end of Christian fundamentalism in terms of their black and white thinking. Here is an example that demonstrates this. A popular book among skeptics is Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark*. The mere title of the book and its cover (which you can see by clicking the link to it) demonstrates this analogy. The world is seen as "demon haunted" just as in Christianity, with the majority of people living in the "dark", believing in superstition and religion, but ignorant of science. While, on the other hand, those who rely on science and are skeptics are the "candle in the dark" or the "light of the world" in Christian Gospel terms. This is the same kind of black and white thinking that puts everyone into two categories, in the light and in the dark, that Christian fundamentalists use as well. In my opinion, it's unhealthy thinking to have belief systems like that.

It is interesting to note that while Carl Sagan is a great teacher of astronomy and science, he has inadequate knowledge and experience with paranormal phenomena. This is demonstrated by the fact that in his book *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark* Sagan devotes a big chapter to debunking the Alien Abduction phenomenon, yet not once does he even personally investigate or interview any abductees at all, like an honest open-minded investigator or truth seeker would. On the other hand, researchers like Harvard Professor John Mack (author of *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens*) and Budd Hopkins (author of *Missing Time*) have done extensive interviews and investigations with abductees for their book, which led them to the conclusion that there was more to the phenomenon than just the "all in the brain" or sleep paralysis. In fact, Mack has personally investigated 76 abductee cases during the course of four years. But how many did Sagan investigate? Zero. Therefore, one ought to give those researchers more credence than skeptics like Sagan who just

dismiss the subject off-hand without any deep investigation for truth.

Of course, all pseudoskeptics will claim to be true skeptics, just like all high pressured salesmen claim to not be high pressure, all liars and con artists claim to be sincere, and all politicians claim to be honest. But as you know, ACTIONS speak louder than words, so the proof of what they are is in their ACTIONS, not words. If a salesman for example, told you "I am not a high pressure salesman" but then proceeds to pressure you to buy his product/service, hounding you without end and not taking no for an answer, then what do you believe, his words or his actions? Likewise, when a self described skeptic tells you that he is a true skeptic who is open to evidence, yet he displays all the characteristics, traits and behaviors of a pseudoskeptic, then do you listen to his words or his actions? The answer is obvious.

Thus, regardless of what they claim about themselves, if they exhibit the follow traits and characteristics, then they fall into the category of "pseudoskeptics".

1) Ignoring facts and evidence that don't fit into their preconceived world view, rather than updating their beliefs to conform to the facts, which is more logical. (e.g. "It can't be, therefore it isn't!") This is known as the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance.

2) Trying to force materialistic explanations, even if they're false, to account for a paranormal event regardless of whether they fit the data. For example, using "cold reading" to explain the amazing accuracy of a psychic reading when no known cold reading technique could account for the facts and circumstances. (see Argument # 16)

3) Moving the goal posts or raising the bar whenever their criteria for evidence is met. For example, a skeptic wants evidence for psi in the form of controlled experiments rather than anecdotal evidence. When this evidence is presented, he will then raise the bar and demand that the experiments be repeatable by other researchers. When this is done, then he will either attack the researchers integrity and character, attack their methods, or demand a report of every detail and minute of the experiment or else he will contend that some unmentioned lack of controls must have been the culprit to explain the positive psi results, etc. He will always find some excuse due to his already made-up mindset. Patrick Huyghe has written an article about this at Extraordinary Claim? Move the Goal Posts!

4) Using double standards in what they will accept as evidence. They will not accept anecdotal evidence for the paranormal because they consider it to be unreliable, but not surprisingly they will accept anecdotal evidence when it supports their position. Also, when psi experiments shows positive results well above, they will not accept it as evidence against psi. But when a psi experiment only shows chance results, they will accept that as evidence against psi.

5) Attacking the character of witnesses and undermining their credibility their evidence or testimonies can't be explained away. As we all know, when politicians can't win on the issues, they resort to character assassinations. Unfortunately, this is also what skeptics and debunkers tend to do as well. When evidence or testimony from key people can't be explained away or are irrefutable, skeptics will find ways to discredit them such as character assassinations or grossly exaggerating and distorting trivial mistakes. This has especially been done with the direct eyewitnesses of the 1947 Roswell Incident, as Stanton Friedman, author of the famous Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a UFO often points out in his articles you can read at www.v-j-enterprises.com/sfhome.html.

6) Dismissing all evidence for the paranormal by classifying it either as anecdotal, untestable, unreplicable, or uncontrolled. Skeptics who wish to close their minds to any evidence, even after asking for it ironically, tend to do so by classifying it into one of the categories above. If the evidence is anecdotal, they will say that anecdotal evidence is worthless scientifically and untestable. If the evidence is in the form of scientific experiments, they will then say that it is unreplicable or uncontrolled.

Here are a list of traits that define the true skeptic vs. the pseudoskeptic.

True Skeptics / Open-Minded Skeptics

Questions everything and takes nothing on faith, even from cherished established institutions.

Asks questions to try to understand new things and are open to learning about them.

Applies critical examination and inquiry to all sides, including their own.

Withholds judgment and does not jump to rash conclusions.

Seeks the truth and considers it the highest aim.

Thinks in terms of possibilities rather than in preserving fixed views.
Fairly and objectively weighs evidence on all sides.
Acknowledges valid convincing evidence rather than ignoring or denying it.
Possess solid sharp common sense and reason.
Are able to adapt their paradigms to new evidence and update their hypothesis to fit the data.
When all conventional explanations for a phenomenon are ruled out, are able to accept paranormal ones.
Accepts that there are mysteries and revels in trying to understand them.
Views science as a tool and methodology, not as a religion or authority to be obeyed.
Understands the difference between the scientific process and the scientific establishment.
Acknowledges that the scientific establishment is subject to politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression, as all human based institutions are - and therefore must be critically examined and scrutinized, rather than taken on faith, especially in the light of contrary evidence to their claims.
Will admit they are wrong when the evidence calls for it.

PseudoSkeptics / Closed-Minded Skeptics

Does not question anything from established non-religious institutions, but takes whatever they say on faith and demands that others do the same.
Does not ask questions to try to understand new things, but judges them by whether they fit into orthodoxy.
Applies "critical thinking" only to that which opposes orthodoxy or materialism, but never to the status quo itself.
Immediately judges as false and debunks anything that contradicts their paradigm.
Are not interested in truth, evidence or facts, only in defending their views.
Cannot think in terms of possibilities, but sees their paradigms as fixed and constant.
Are willing to lie and deceive to discredit their opponents.
Automatically dismisses and denies all data that contradicts materialism and orthodoxy.
Are judgmental and quick to draw conclusions about things they know little or nothing about.
Scoffs and ridicules what they oppose instead of using objective analysis and examination.
When faced with evidence or facts they can't refute, uses semantics, word games and denial to try to obfuscate the issue.
Unable to adapt their paradigms to new evidence, and denies data which doesn't fit into them.
When all conventional explanations for an unexplainable phenomenon are ruled out, are still not able to accept paranormal ones.
Dislikes mystery and uncertainty, and insist that all unknown phenomena must have a mundane explanation.
Views the scientific establishment as a religion and authority to be taken on faith and

never questioned or challenged. Does not understand the difference between the scientific process/methodology and the scientific establishment institution.
Assumes that the scientific establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression for no other reason than blind faith in authority.
Will never admit that they are wrong no matter what, regardless of evidence.

Wikipedia's original entry on pathological skepticism (before pseudoskeptics took it down) listed these defining behaviors of pseudoskeptics:

"The difference between pseudoskepticism and skepticism appear in the conduct of an individual's actions. Among the indications of pseudoskeptical actions are:

Resorting to various logical fallacies (usually in an attack against those disputing a theory).
The assumption of facts (such as, stating theories determine phenomena).
The obfuscation of facts.
The use of attractive or neutral euphemisms to disguise unpleasant facts concerning their own positions.
Insisting that fundamental framework and theory of science hardly change.
Unwavering belief that science is a consensus and run on majority rule.
Maintaining a stance of hostility and intolerance.
Instituting hurdles against new theories by "moving the goalposts".
Ignoring intellectual suppression of unorthodox theories.
Judging a theory or phenomena without investigation and insisting on ignoring the details thereafter."

In the SCEPCOP Forum, Steve Trueblue observed these five consistent patterns in pseudoskeptics:

"As a skilled observer you will also note that PseudoSkeptics:

Seldom, in fact almost never, ask questions, reflecting Zero Curiosity thus learning difficulties
Practice a very high level of self deception and mistakenly believe they can lie to adults as they did in childhood

Display markedly deficient reading and comprehension skills
Display inability to connect thoughts sequentially and plan an argument- often defeating their own case
Depend on bluster and bullying and name calling to make up for lack of argument content"

In short, these pseudoskeptics are materialist fundamentalists driven by fanatical beliefs and views which they seek to proselytize to the world. Regardless of facts or evidence, they ALWAYS start and end with the following dogmatic positions:

Paranormal claims are all bunk and cannot be true. There is no evidence for them.
Conspiracies are all false. There is no evidence for them. Official sources are not to be questioned.
Anything that challenges the status quo and materialism is wrong and must be debunked.
Only natural materialistic explanations are acceptable. Paranormal ones are not.

They begin with those precepts and always come back to them, regardless of the facts or evidence in any investigation or debate, EVERYTIME. That's one consistent thing you will notice about them. And they will resort to playing games, ridicule, denial, even deliberate distortion, fabrication and connecting false dots to maintain these core positions. That's why they are not really capable of serious honest discussion. Instead, they play games and cheat at them in order to win. I've seen them do it time and time again. It doesn't matter how much proof or evidence you have. All of that is irrelevant to them. They seek only to validate their beliefs, not change their beliefs in accord with the facts or data.

They will never admit that they've lost, even though technically they have. When cornered by facts and reason, they resort to denial or ad hominem attacks. Or they even will spin your own arguments against you, without basis. It's like winning a chess game against an opponent, and even though the rules say they are checkmated, they still refuse to admit defeat. That's not fair, honest, or decent behavior.

For more on pseudoskeptical tactics, see [Zen and the Art of Debunkery](#) and [Stupid Skeptic Tricks](#).

The late Marcello Truzzi, former member of CSICOP and critic of pseudoskepticism, wrote an article about pseudoskeptics which you can read about [here](#).

One of the tell-tale signs of pseudoskeptical mentality is in the words they use when describing believers. If they describe them as: “delusional, irrational, gullible, charlatans, superstitious, wishful-thinking, primitive and child-like thinking”, etc. then it’s a strong indication of their a priori mentality.

PseudoSkeptics such as the CSICOP and JREF crowd are definitely not open minded truth seekers, but rather their words and behavior are that of automatic dismissing and denying that which doesn’t fit into their paradigm. They are cynics who have closed their mind to anything that doesn't fit into their world view, dismissing all else as misperception, delusion, or fraud. But don’t take my word for it, for if you read their own writing and hear what they say, it’s obvious from their own words and behavior, and from their tunnel-view of reality, as well as their righteous indignation of what’s real and what’s “quackery” (a word they love to use). They do not seek to understand, but to attack and discredit.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the term “pseudo” means “False or counterfeit; fake.” These debunkers exhibit a false mask of skepticism. In actuality, they are cynics, debunkers, and deniers. They deny and dismiss all evidence that doesn’t fit their views, whether scientific or anecdotal, no matter how credible or plentiful, and look for excuses to justify it. They are not about seeking truth or open-minded investigation, only in discrediting whatever doesn’t fit into the orthodoxy/materialist paradigm.

Unfortunately, pseudoskeptical groups have not heeded the warnings and advice of one of their own heroes, the late Carl Sagan:

"...The chief deficiency I see in the skeptical movement is its polarization: Us vs. Them -- the sense that we have a monopoly on the truth; that those other people who believe in all these stupid doctrines are morons; that if you're sensible, you'll listen to us; and if not, to hell with you. This is nonconstructive. It does not get our message across. It condemns us to permanent minority status." - Carl Sagan

"People are not stupid. They believe things for reasons. The last way for skeptics to get the attention of bright, curious, intelligent people is to belittle or condescend or to show arrogance toward their beliefs." - Carl Sagan

"The suppression of uncomfortable ideas may be common in religion or in politics, but it is not the path to knowledge, and there's no place for it in the endeavor of science." - Carl Sagan

These illogical ways of thinking are strange coming from people who pride themselves on their logic and rationality! Of course, flawed thinking such as the above can come from both believers and skeptics. That is why it is good to point them out to keep both sides in check.

Afterlife researcher Dr. Victor Zammit, describes how these debunkers reject what doesn't fit into their world view through the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

"Let's borrow a page from traditional psychology. When a skeptic receives information - say, scientific proof for the afterlife -- which is fundamentally inconsistent with his or her entrenched cherished beliefs, the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her beliefs to reduce and to offset the intense biological, emotional and mental anxiety. The intense anxiety is created by the information that the afterlife exists.

The skeptic's mind tries to resist and reject this new information (even if the information is the absolute truth) - hence the cognitive (the mind) 'dissonance' - between the new information - (i.e., the positive evidence for the afterlife) and the skeptic's own personal beliefs that the afterlife cannot exist.

Closed-minded skepticism is extremely difficult to shift because his/her skepticism is 'electrically wired' into the skeptic's neurological, psychological, intellectual and

emotional belief system. Thus with absolute certainty, this skeptic inexorably loses all sense of empirical equanimity.“

Dr. Zammit also hit it on the head about how pseudoskeptics overgeneralize and distort information:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

“Skeptics can be seen to overgeneralize saying for instance that because some mediums are fraudulent therefore all mediums are fraudulent.

Further, skeptics distort information saying that because it may be possible to reproduce certain phenomena by fraud - even at odds of one billion to one - that they have proven that fraud took place. In this sense, the skeptics find it impossible to transcend their 'metaprogram' (their overriding world view of reality) of materialistic beliefs.”

As to why pseudoskeptics believe what they do, this author, who spent time undercover in a skeptical organization, might be able to shed some light on that:

http://www.scientificexploration.org/journal/jse_16_1_leiter.pdf

"A person who has been duped frequently in everyday life might learn by bitter experience to be cautious and wary. The reaction of those who have joined PhACT is however more dysfunctional. They have been wounded at a deeper level, to the extent that what was purported to be a valid philosophy of life, and in which they were heavily involved, turns out to be empty and useless, even damaging, in their eyes. Thus, they gravitate to what appears to them to be the ultimate non-faith-based philosophy, Science. Unfortunately, while they loudly proclaim their righteousness, based on their professed adherence to “hard science”, they do so with the one thing no true scientist can afford to possess, a closed mind. Instead of becoming scientifically minded, they become adherents of scientism, the belief system in which science and only science has all the answers to everything.

This regrettable condition acts to preclude their unbiased consideration of phenomena on the cutting edge of science, which is not how a true scientist should behave. In fact, many "Skeptics" will not even read significantly into the literature on the subjects about which they are most skeptical. I have direct experience with this specific behavior on the part of a number of PhACT members. Initially, I attributed that behavior to just plain laziness, but lately I've begun to suspect that those individuals may actually have a phobia about reading material that is contrary to their own views. It seems entirely possible that they fear "contamination" from that exposure will eventually lead to (Gasp!) acceptance of the opposition's position. Such scientifically inclined, but psychologically scarred people tend to join Skeptics' organizations much as one might join any other support group, say, Alcoholics Anonymous. There they find comfort, consolation, and support amongst their own kind.

Anyone who has spent much time engaging members of Skeptics' organizations knows about their strong inclination toward ridicule and ad hominem criticism of those with differing viewpoints. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many members of PhACT have been rather offended by my position as someone who is skeptical of Skeptics. As the old adage states, "They can dish it out, but they can't take it."

In school, you are taught that "critical thinking" means to refute and ridicule anything that opposes the establishment or status quo, but never the status quo itself. A true skeptic can rise above that and apply skepticism and critical thought toward established orthodoxy, but a pseudo-skeptic cannot. Instead, the pseudo-skeptic follows the school system's form of "critical thinking", applying it only to those who oppose orthodoxy in defense of the status quo.

In that sense, they are in reality "establishment defenders" rather than true skeptics. That is why they NEVER challenge, criticize or scrutinize their government or any part of the establishment, including the pharmaceutical companies, CIA or FBI, even if logic, facts, evidence or moral cause dictates that they should.

To these establishment defenders, authority = truth, and as such is always blameless in their eyes. That is their religion, so hence, all their skills, talents and knowledge are used to serve their true God - orthodoxy. In their view, establishment authority can do

no wrong, even if they murder, traffic drugs, steal, lie, stage terrorist attacks, start wars by funding both sides, etc.

What this means is that these pseudo-skeptics or establishment defenders do not serve truth as their master. As such, they are willing to lie and deceive to serve their masters (there are so many documented cases of this). Thus they are not "free" in any sense of the word, nor honest, which is sad.

This is why not only are they closed minded against anything to do with paranormal phenomena, but are vehemently opposed to all claims of government conspiracies as well, no matter how well supported, for it offends their "true master" (which is not truth).

Examples of famous pseudoskeptics and establishment defenders: (Check them all out and you will see that their actions fit the above description)

James Randi and his JREF crowd

Michael Shermer

CSICOP and their crowd

Penn and Teller and their "Bullshit" show (pun intended) which is an insult to one's intelligence

The Mythbusters

Phil Plait and his "Bad Astronomy" folks

Scientism – The Religion of Pseudoskeptics?

Now let me clarify something. Critics of pseudoskeptics have accused them of believing in Scientism – the belief that science is to be treated as an authority with all the answers and taken on faith, just like a religion is. In response, pseudoskeptics claim that science is a process of independent peer review and replication and therefore not a religion.

So then, is science a religion, you might ask? Well, yes and no. Technically, science is not a religion. It is a tool and methodology of obtaining logical conclusions through evidence and inquiry. As such, it is not an entity that holds positions or viewpoints, like people do. Therefore, science is not pro or anti-paranormal, anymore than a pencil, computer program or mathematical formula is.

However, the scientific establishment is another matter, because it involves people, politics, power, money, institutions and vested interests. And as such, politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression are naturally a part of it. Realists know and understand this. But for some reason pseudoskeptics don't.

The key fallacy that pseudoskeptics make is lumping the scientific process and the scientific establishment into one, and assuming that they are one and the same. That is the major fallacy of the organized skepticism movement, which consists of the JREF, CSICOP and Michael Shermer type crowd.

In doing so, they falsely assume that the science and medical establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression. That's where their major mistake is. And as such, they deem the science and medical establishment as an unassailable authority that is not to be questioned or challenged. In that sense, they treat science as a religion. So even though they claim that science is not a religion, they still treat it as such, by holding the views of the science establishment as an unquestionable authority.

So, if researchers such as Dean Radin, Rupert Sheldrake or Dr. Gary Schwartz come up with evidence for psychic phenomena, it is automatically dismissed as invalid, simply because it challenges the orthodoxy of the science establishment, not because the experiments were not legit. And they will use any excuse to do so, including the lamest ones.

Likewise, when evidence comes up that vaccines, fluoride, aspartame or mercury dental fillings are dangerous and harmful, that evidence is suppressed and deemed inadmissible, simply because it threatens the medical establishment and its vested interests, not because the evidence is untrue.

By filtering out such contrary evidence, even when it is legit and valid, pseudoskeptics definitely are treating the science and medical establishment as a religion. And as we all know, religion is authority and faith based, not evidence based.

You see, no one likes to invest a lot of time and money into something, only to have it proven wrong or changed. And the science/medical establishment is no exception. They are people with political interests, not objective unbiased machines. So let's get real here.

You don't have to be educated to understand this. Anyone with common sense, street smarts, and real life experience knows this. But pseudoskeptics, in their fanaticism, ignore such common sense realities. They are fanatics, not realists.

Furthermore, organized skeptics like to tout "science" as a peer reviewed process of independent replication, and therefore totally reliable. In doing so, they treat it like a "democratic process" in which the majority of scientists decide what's true by agreeing on it. This is another fallacy, because it assumes that most scientists are objective and unbiased, and free to say whatever they want without consequence.

But this is not the way the real world of money, power and politics works. Any realist knows that when you work for an institution or receive funding, you have to "tow the party line", or else you are out. It's that simple. Any scientist who says something that opposes the views of those he works for, will jeopardize his career and reputation. There are many real life examples of scientists and researchers who have lost funding or suffered damage to their career for espousing unorthodox positions, even if their position was legit and evidence-based.

Moreover, most people are not unbiased, open minded, or hold truth as the highest value. Instead, they are concerned with their image, reputation, career, funding, and hold rigid views that they feel safe and comfortable in. Many people do not like uncertainty or mystery. They want a world where things make sense and are predictable and well-defined. That's why they are prone to fall into rigid unchanging belief systems. Why would scientists be any different. They may be more educated than the average person, sure, but they are humans, and humans have biases.

It is the truth seeker and freethinker who questions everything and does not hold any authority as truth, who is most likely to find the truth. Not the most educated or well connected with institutions.

Pseudoskeptics ignore all this, or are blind to it, because they are fanatics, not truth seekers or freethinkers. When you look at the overall picture, this becomes obvious.

Thus, the key difference in this area between the pseudoskeptic and the truth seeker/freethinker, is that the former holds the science/medical establishment as a religion of unquestionable authority, whereas the latter does not, and recognizes it for what it is – an institution with vested interests, politics, power, money, control and censorship that is not above suppressing that which threatens it.

Anyone who examines the material produced by pseudoskeptics can see this apparent pattern. They hold everything said by the science/medical establishment as unassailable truth and authority, and never question or scrutinize it, ever, while automatically dismissing anything that opposes it. That's not skepticism. It's thought control, mind control, and suppression of truth.

Now, let me clarify something. It is NOT my position to argue that all paranormal claims are true. In fact, I happen to be skeptical of many claims myself. Instead, I am for open minded inquiry and honestly weighing the evidence. Not all paranormal claims are true, but some are backed by a lot more evidence than others. For example, ESP and ghosts are backed by a much higher percentage of testimonials than the Loch Ness Monster is. So, I argue that the evidence for paranormal phenomena should be considered and investigated as possibilities rather than rejected automatically ruled out just because it doesn't fit in with prevailing beliefs and world views. I do not claim to have all the answers to all the paranormal mysteries. However, based on my experience and research, I will argue that the overwhelming evidence as a whole points to the existence of some sort of metaphysical reality that exists, and that at least some paranormal claims have a basis in reality. My position is that SOME types of paranormal phenomena which are backed by evidence and widespread testimonials (e.g. ESP, Psi, Telepathy, NDE's) have something to them other than mere hallucination or delusion.

Very few people are willing to cast their skepticism on all sides, including their own beliefs. Most people, including the pseudoskeptics, seek to validate what they already believe, and reject the data that would cause them to change their beliefs. We at SCEPCOP try to avoid this by applying true skepticism to all sides, including our own, and basing our conclusions on the data itself rather than on our subjective emotional

beliefs.

With that, let's begin the debunking of their common arguments.

Note: I have assigned numbers to each pseudoskeptical argument so that I can reference them throughout this book.

Note: Although CSICOP has changed its name to CSI, I will refer to it as CSICOP here because that is still what most people know it as.

"I shall not commit the fashionable stupidity of regarding everything I cannot explain as a fraud."

- Carl Gustav Jung

"It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware."

– Albert Einstein

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes."

- Marcel Proust, French novelist

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[Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers](#)

“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

- Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

“There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.”

- Søren Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher

“Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world.”

- Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

Introduction

Dear Reader,

Greetings. My name is Winston Wu. I am a researcher and explorer of the paranormal, psychic phenomena, metaphysics, quantum physics, consciousness research, realms of higher consciousness, and religion/philosophy. This book rebuts and critiques the most common arguments made by pseudoskeptics (those who claim to be skeptics but in fact are cynics, debunkers, scoffers) regarding paranormal and psychic phenomena, showing the flaws and fallacies in their thinking, philosophy and methodology. I’ve listed their common arguments one-by-one and pointed out the fallacies, flaws and problems in them based on years of experience in debating with them.

The Paranormal is one of the most exciting frontiers today. Research into Consciousness, Quantum Physics and Psychic Phenomena, etc. explores venues that are unlocking the mysteries of the universe and gateways to other dimensions or levels of reality and consciousness. These provide deeper insights into a larger nature of reality, revealing insights into the meaning of existence and spawning hope for a better future in which humanity's consciousness and awareness are elevated to new heights, transcending greed, lust for power, hatred, violence, ignorance, and the confines of a materialistic paradigm that keeps us living in fear. Therefore, the study of the

Paranormal is a key stepping stone for humanity's next stage of evolution.

However, standing in the way are groups of organized fundamentalists who call themselves "skeptics" but in reality are dogmatic defenders of establishment and materialistic reductionistic science who reject and deny anything which challenges that. They are pseudoskeptics cause their actions and behaviors are the antithesis to what the word skepticism really means. (More on that later)

The pseudoskepticism movement includes organizations such as CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), now known as CSI (Committee for Skeptical Inquiry), JREF (James Randi Educational Foundation) and professional Skeptics such as Michael Shermer of Skeptic Magazine, as well as many smaller groups and websites. In media reports and programs on paranormal phenomena, these skeptics are often presented as the final authorities on the matter and go virtually unchallenged. And unfortunately, most paranormal/psychic researchers have neither the time nor interest to debate these debunkers.

And that's where we come in. This book's objective is to expose and debunk the fallacies, flaws and misinformation of the pseudoskepticism movement.

Now it's our turn to form a counter movement and coalition. Enter SCEPCOP – The Scientific Committee to Evaluate PseudoSkeptical Criticism of the Paranormal. As CSICOP was formed to "police the claims of psi", SCEPCOP now in turn acts to "police the cynicism of pseudoskeptics". We will debunk their arguments, and reveal their fallacies, misinformation, censorship, denial, inconsistencies, pseudo-dogmas posing as "rules of logic" and double standards, showing that they are not objective truth seekers, but biased debunkers.

Just to state for the record though, opposing pseudoskepticism does NOT mean that SCEPCOP endorses every crackpot claim, theory and fantasy out there. Not at all. We believe in applying equal skepticism to both sides, as well as the objective weighing of evidence, for as you might expect, some claims and phenomenon have a lot of solid evidence to back it up, while others have little or none.

First though, let me tell you how I came to write this book.

How this book came to be written

Possessing a vivid imagination and the ability to think outside the box, I've always been unimpressed with mundane ordinary life and materialistic values. Thus I've always aspired to reach higher, for deeper meaning and understanding, and the bigger picture. Thus I've always had an interest in esoteric things, and been drawn to spirituality, religion, and the search for meaning. I started out during childhood as an Evangelical Christian fundamentalist, which gave me the structure and solid sense of purpose that I needed at the time. When I turned 19, I felt that the absolutist doctrines of my faith were too limiting and narrow minded for me, and not allowing me to learn anything new without fear. This began a slow de-conversion process which led me to become Agnostic for a while. You can read my story about my deconversion entitled *My Rise to Christianity and Transcendence From It*. (I also have another book in similar form to this one debunking and refuting main Christian arguments entitled *Debunking Christian Circular Arguments and Assumptions*)

Since then, I have always been a critical opponent of brainwashing tactics, after having been brainwashed myself a number of times, but learning from it each time. As a result, I've written various debunking articles. See a list of them [here](#).

After my Christian deconversion, I found that the Atheist paradigm didn't have the answers to life's mysteries or even to unexplained phenomena either. I knew that its paradigm was insufficient as well. Neither Atheism nor Evangelical Christianity seemed adequate, but oddly enough many people seem to think that those are the only two belief systems to choose from. Realizing that there were way too many things that couldn't be explained by conventional or scientific explanations, I started looking for answers in non-organized forms of spirituality. After further research and questioning, I discovered many fascinating things and new paradigms that fit the unexplained data, which gave me a more comprehensive view of reality and spirituality. I discovered that there was indeed powerful evidence (some of which is irrefutable) that some paranormal phenomena are genuine and do have a basis, both scientifically and in terms of anecdotal evidence.

To try to gain an understanding of the other side of the issue, (which is what you should

do when you want to learn something in depth) I went to skeptics to ask what they had to say and also read some of their literature. I found that what they had to say made sense on the surface, but was very different than what I heard from the literature about paranormal phenomena, accounts of paranormal experiences from ordinary people (some of which I know and trust), and my own experiences. In order to try to make sense of such different but arguable views, I tried to sift through the details and the evidence. What I found was that although both skeptics and believers can be closed-minded and tend to rationalize away what they don't want to believe, in either case the objective evidence for some of the paranormal was incredibly strong and undeniable.

As I became more educated and informed of the evidence for different types of paranormal phenomena, I presented this to skeptics both on message boards and internet newsgroups. What resulted was an endless charade of arguments on both sides, with each side bringing up facts that support their side while denying the facts of the other side. This is typical of debates in general, no doubt, but since there were so many types of paranormal phenomena, the topic range was broad and diverse enough to make continuous and interesting discussions. Consequently, the discussions dragged on much longer than expected. Not only were there so many topics to discuss, but I kept finding more and more quality evidence to support my view each time I looked. All this became a fascinating exercise in the quest for truth.

During the discussions and debates, I was led to skeptical material such as Professor Bob Carroll's *The Skeptic's Dictionary*, editions of *Skeptical Inquirer* (published by CSICOP), articles by the infamous paranormal debunker James Randi, and others. Over time, I developed a strong recognition and grasp of their system of philosophical arguments and sensed the patterns in them. After hearing almost all the arguments they used, I learned how to respond to them to the point of it being second nature to me. I knew their strengths and weaknesses, just as an experienced chess player understood the strengths and weaknesses of the positions of his opponent's pieces. For almost three years, I debated skeptics ranging from honest doubters looking for truth (like me), to those who were clearly cynics masquerading as skeptics having already made up their minds before looking at the evidence.

These skeptics included cynics, debunkers, Atheists, Humanists, certain scientists bent on materialistic reductionist world views, those for whom science is their God (even though they won't admit it), scientific materialists, haters of religion, etc. Now we call them "pseudoskeptics" because although they pose as skeptics, their skepticism is "pseudo" meaning "False or counterfeit; fake." (*American Heritage Dictionary*) Hence the title of this book.

Eventually, I realized that their skepticism was not about an open inquiry for truth, but rather a philosophy they used to manipulate data to fit their beliefs and reject anything outside of it on purely subjective grounds. This philosophy was pseudo-intellectual in nature and used to discredit and invalidate both claimants and evidence. Oddly, these skeptics seem to think that they can use semantics and rules from this philosophy to erase evidence from reality! They think that they can invalidate real-life objective events and evidence of a paranormal nature by putting labels on them or quoting some theorem or axiom such as “anecdotal evidence is invalid”, “appeal to authority”, “ad populum fallacy argument” etc. In effect, they attempt to use semantics to erase objective reality. Unfortunately for them, reality doesn’t work that way.

It was obvious that these skeptics were not seeking the truth nor were they open to it. Instead, they were about systematically trying to debunk everything that didn’t fit in with their a priori staunch materialistic views. Therefore, they did not ask questions of an exploratory nature, but rather, they taunted and attacked believers and made claims and judgments about their paranormal experiences. They had already made up their minds beforehand, and would only accept evidence that fit their conclusions. A true skeptic and truth-seeker analyzes both sides and updates his views and opinions to conform with the facts, while a pseudoskeptic on the other hand manipulates the facts to fit into their beliefs, using selective attention as well.

Then I suddenly realized at the time that no books or in-depth analyses have been written to directly counter the arguments and philosophy of organized skeptics and debunkers. There were a few articles written about closed-minded skeptics in general, but no in-depth point by point critique or debunking of their arguments. For almost every other organized belief system, there are books written analyzing its precepts and doctrines, but not for organized skepticism. Therefore, I decided to be the first to write such a thing, making use of the knowledge I gained over the years and my debating skills. I felt that being the first in something was an accomplishment that I would be inspired to do. And that’s how this book came to be written back in 2001.

When it was first released, it became widely acclaimed in the paranormal community as groundbreaking, effective and the first of its kind. It led to my appearance on several radio shows such as Forbidden Truth by my friend Michael Goodspeed, The Clyde Lewis Show (KOTK 1080 AM) in Portland, Oregon, and Ghostly Talk Radio (you can listen to that interview in the archive section of their website at www.ghostlytalk.com or on YouTube here). Later, due to widespread recognition, I was invited to an

international conference as a guest speaker at the Mysteries of the World theme park in Switzerland, and to a public debate with skeptics in New York.

Of course, not surprisingly the skeptics later issued a piece to debunk this book. A skeptic named Paul Sandoval published his counter-piece to it, which you can download [here](#). As you can see from it, he simply does more of the same, twisting words into “logical fallacies”, which anyone can do to anyone they disagree with, putting labels on things, and twisting semantics to his advantage, none of which disproves any of the facts, examples and evidence I cited, nor erases evidence for paranormal phenomena from existence. People who do this are “in their own world”, so to speak. (To see a great example of word games from pseudoskeptics that have nothing to do with reality, see this online exchange I had with one in which he was proven to have lied several times beyond any shadow of doubt.)

Years later in 2009, I formed a coalition and website called SCEPCOP – Scientific Committee to Evaluate Pseudoskeptical Criticism of the Paranormal, which was the world’s first organized counter-skeptic group created to counter CSICOP, JREF, etc. Although at this time SCEPCOP is in its infancy, its popularity has soared among the Paranormal community and received attention from the Skeptic camp as well. (See a list of paranormal websites and blogs announcing SCEPCOP [here](#)) And in August of 2009, the popular paranormal magazine Atlantis Rising did an article on SCEPCOP in issue 77, which you can download [here](#) in PDF format. (see pages 24, 26 and 61)

With the exception of sensational pro-paranormal programs, skeptics are often given the chance to present their arguments and explanations in the media, national magazines, and television programs, without rebuttal from the other side, even when their explanations are insufficient to explain all the data. As a result, there is often an imbalance in the presentation of paranormal and psychic phenomena in the media, leaving most viewers and believers uninformed. This book attempts to counteract the imbalance. It is written both for the education and knowledge of the believer who deals with skeptics, and for skeptics who are willing to hear counter-arguments to their positions.

Now let me clarify that I have nothing against honest true skepticism. It is good to have a healthy dose of skepticism to protect one from scams, con artists, misleading advertising, misleading claims, propaganda, brainwashing, jumping to conclusions, etc. But when closed-minded cynicism comes masquerading as skepticism, it becomes a block to truth finding and open-minded investigation. However, those new to this

subject may not be able to discern the difference between open honest skepticism and closed-minded pseudoskepticism. Therefore, let us differentiate between the two.

PseudoSkeptics vs. True Skeptics: Behaviors and Tactics

According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, a skeptic is:

"One who is yet undecided as to what is true; one who is looking or inquiring for what is true; an inquirer after facts or reasons."

Pyrrho, the founder of "Skepticism", intended for it to be about open inquiry and suspension of judgment.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"In classical philosophy, skepticism refers to the teachings and the traits of the 'Skeptikoi', a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they 'asserted nothing but only opined.' (Liddell and Scott) In this sense, philosophical skepticism, or Pyrrhonism, is the philosophical position that one should suspend judgment in investigations.[1]"

But rather than inquiring, or asking questions to try to understand something, they seek to debunk, discredit and ridicule anything that doesn't fit into their belief system. And rather than suspending judgment, they make accusations of fraud and delusion of all paranormal claimants. They are PROSECUTORS, not investigators. Hence, we call them pseudoskeptics (a term coined by the late Marcello Truzzi) for their actions and behaviors are the complete antithesis of what skepticism truly means.

According to WikiSynergy:

Pseudoskepticism (or pseudoskepticism) is defined as thinking that claims to be Skeptical but is actually faith-based disbelief. Because real skepticism is a justifiable position, pseudoskepticism may also be defined as making pseudoscientific arguments in pursuit of a skeptical agenda.

Pseudoskepticism is a general term which encompasses two types of faith-based disbelief: making positive claims that something is wrong or unreal without evidence (positive disbelief), and rejecting sufficient evidence.

A "true skeptic" objectively inquires and seeks evidence, challenging all sides including their own beliefs (see here). But these pseudoskeptics do anything but. As someone observed to me:

"The original definition of skeptic was a person who questions ALL beliefs, facts, and points-of-view. A healthy perspective in my opinion. Today's common definition of skeptic is someone who questions any belief that strays outside of the status quo, yet leaving the status quo itself completely unquestioned. Kind of a juvenile and intellectually lazy practice in my opinion."

Even Wikipedia indirectly admits that modern skepticism is really about rejecting new information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"The word skepticism can characterize a position on a single claim, but in scholastic circles more frequently describes a lasting mind-set and an approach to accepting or rejecting new information."

And this insightful YouTuber eloquently hit the bull's eye with this comment:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vks49Bfn544>

"What skeptics fail to understand is that skepticism involves being skeptical of your own position, it does not mean just being skeptical of that which you do not believe in, otherwise we are all skeptics and that renders their use of the term "skeptic" meaningless. A true skeptic casts skepticism on their own position as well. Since the Randi crowd do not employ skepticism in this respect then they are fairly termed pseudo skeptics and demean the term skepticism."

So, pseudoskeptics have hijacked the term "skeptic" to refer to the one who suppresses, rather than the one who "doubts or questions" which it is supposed to refer to. As such, a "skeptic" now refers to the ridiculer, debunker and discreditor of the "questioner" (who is the true skeptic) rather than to the questioner himself. In other words, the new "skeptic" is someone who debunks a "skeptic" by wearing the hat of the person they are out to debunk, in effect impersonating them! It's a highly deceptive form of role reversal that is very sneaky and devious, no doubt.

And furthermore, it seems way too calculated and militant to be due to some accidental misunderstanding, ignorance or closed mindedness. Hijacking a word to mean its opposite seems more like part of some sort of agenda, perhaps a deliberate disinformation campaign or cultural mind control. If that sounds terrible, well, we are here to expose that thank goodness.

In truth and by their actions, these pseudoskeptics are defenders of the status quo and materialism. They are fanatics and dogmatists who have no regard for facts, evidence or truth, but have an a priori faith-based belief that paranormal phenomena is impossible and therefore set out to debunk it, not investigate it. And they will distort, dismiss and obfuscate to get their way. Thus, they generally have no objectivity toward evidence, but bigotry and emotional fanaticism.

If you're wondering if this is true, then ask yourself this: Why do those who attack, ridicule and deny all paranormal claims also usually deny all conspiracies and facts in support of them, while dogmatically accepting all propaganda by the media and establishment? Have you ever seen a paranormal debunker like James Randi, Michael Shermer or CSICOP's Skeptical Inquirer challenge anything official held by the status quo at all, period? If not, what does that tell you? Think about it.

And that's what a "skeptic" is today in the media and pop culture. Obviously this means that their skepticism is highly selective and subjective, not distributed equally in all directions, hence an extreme bias exists in them rather than any form of objectivity. Skepticism should be a tool and method of inquiry to help one learn things and find truth, not be used as a cover to defend one's own rigid narrow views. Questioning things and seeking answers helps one learn things, but trying to debunk everything outside your world view doesn't.

Dean Radin, who spent many years studying parapsychology and skeptical views, concluded the same in his acclaimed book *Entangled Minds*: (pages 10-11)

"Some skeptics pushed doubt to extremes and insisted that positive evidence was always due to mistakes or intentional fraud. As I saw it, within this dialectic one side was struggling to understand the depths of inner space by probing Nature with clever questions. The other was trying to maintain the status quo through passionate, and sometimes vicious, denial. The former were willing to take risks to advance knowledge, the latter were naysayers interested mainly in defending dogma."

Chris Carter, author of *Parapsychology and the Skeptics*, accurately described the pseudoskeptics' true motivations in this interview:

<http://www.skeptiko.com/blog/?p=8>

"You have to remember that the argument is not really about the evidence. The argument is about their assumptions and their preconceptions. Their preconceptions are, with these sort of phenomena, that they don't make any sense and challenge their world view. So, they're going to do anything they possibly can to dismiss evidence that challenges their preconceptions."

The late great author Robert Anton Wilson observed the same regarding pseudoskeptics, calling them "fundamentalist materialists" and "irrational rationalists" in this interview:

http://www.nii.net/~obie/1988_interview.htm

“DAB: One of your recent books is *The New Inquisition: Irrational Rationalism and the Citadel of Science*. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about this book.

RAW: I coined the term irrational rationalism because those people claim to be rationalists, but they're governed by such a heavy body of taboos. They're so fearful, and so hostile, and so narrow, and frightened, and uptight and dogmatic. I thought it was a fascinating paradox: irrational rationalists. Later on I found out I didn't invent that. Somebody else who wrote an article on CSICOP, that's the group they all belong to: Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Somebody else who wrote about them also used the term irrational rationalism. It's a hard term to resist when you think about those people.

I wrote this book because I got tired satirizing fundamentalist Christianity, I had done enough of that in my other books. I decided to satirize fundamentalist materialism for a change, because the two are equally comical. All fundamentalism is comical, unless you believe in it, in which case you'd become a fanatic yourself, and want everybody else to share your fundamentalism. But if you're not a fundamentalist yourself, fundamentalists are the funniest people on the planet. The materialist fundamentalists are funnier than the Christian fundamentalists, because they think they're rational!

DAB: They call themselves skeptical.

RAW: Yes, but they're not skeptical! They're never skeptical about anything except the things they have a prejudice against. None of them ever says anything skeptical about the AMA, or about anything in establishment science or any entrenched dogma. They're only skeptical about new ideas that frighten them. They're actually dogmatically committed to what they were taught when they were in college, which was about 1948-53, somewhere in that period. If you go back and study what was being taught in college in those days as the latest scientific theories, you find out that's what these people still believe. They haven't had a new idea in 30 years, that's all that happened to them. They just rigidified, they crystallized around 1960.”

As Wilson stated, these pseudoskeptics are fundamentalists on the opposite extreme end of Christian fundamentalism in terms of their black and white thinking. Here is an example that demonstrates this. A popular book among skeptics is Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark*. The mere title of the book and its cover (which you can see by clicking the link to it) demonstrates this analogy. The world is seen as "demon haunted" just as in Christianity, with the majority of people living in the "dark", believing in superstition and religion, but ignorant of science. While, on the other hand, those who rely on science and are skeptics are the "candle in the dark" or the "light of the world" in Christian Gospel terms. This is the same kind of black and white thinking that puts everyone into two categories, in the light and in the dark, that Christian fundamentalists use as well. In my opinion, it's unhealthy thinking to have belief systems like that.

It is interesting to note that while Carl Sagan is a great teacher of astronomy and science, he has inadequate knowledge and experience with paranormal phenomena. This is demonstrated by the fact that in his book *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark* Sagan devotes a big chapter to debunking the Alien Abduction phenomenon, yet not once does he even personally investigate or interview any abductees at all, like an honest open-minded investigator or truth seeker would. On the other hand, researchers like Harvard Professor John Mack (author of *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens*) and Budd Hopkins (author of *Missing Time*) have done extensive interviews and investigations with abductees for their book, which led them to the conclusion that there was more to the phenomenon than just the "all in the brain" or sleep paralysis. In fact, Mack has personally investigated 76 abductee cases during the course of four years. But how many did Sagan investigate? Zero. Therefore, one ought to give those researchers more credence than skeptics like Sagan who just dismiss the subject off-hand without any deep investigation for truth.

Of course, all pseudoskeptics will claim to be true skeptics, just like all high pressured salesmen claim to not be high pressure, all liars and con artists claim to be sincere, and all politicians claim to be honest. But as you know, ACTIONS speak louder than words, so the proof of what they are is in their ACTIONS, not words. If a salesman for example, told you "I am not a high pressure salesman" but then proceeds to pressure you to buy his product/service, hounding you without end and not taking no for an answer, then what do you believe, his words or his actions? Likewise, when a self described skeptic tells you that he is a true skeptic who is open to evidence, yet he displays all the characteristics, traits and behaviors of a pseudoskeptic, then do you listen to his words or his actions? The answer is obvious.

Thus, regardless of what they claim about themselves, if they exhibit the follow traits and characteristics, then they fall into the category of “pseudoskeptics”.

1) Ignoring facts and evidence that don't fit into their preconceived world view, rather than updating their beliefs to conform to the facts, which is more logical. (e.g. “It can't be, therefore it isn't!”) This is known as the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance.

2) Trying to force materialistic explanations, even if they're false, to account for a paranormal event regardless of whether they fit the data. For example, using “cold reading” to explain the amazing accuracy of a psychic reading when no known cold reading technique could account for the facts and circumstances. (see Argument # 16)

3) Moving the goal posts or raising the bar whenever their criteria for evidence is met. For example, a skeptic wants evidence for psi in the form of controlled experiments rather than anecdotal evidence. When this evidence is presented, he will then raise the bar and demand that the experiments be repeatable by other researchers. When this is done, then he will either attack the researchers integrity and character, attack their methods, or demand a report of every detail and minute of the experiment or else he will contend that some unmentioned lack of controls must have been the culprit to explain the positive psi results, etc. He will always find some excuse due to his already made-up mindset. Patrick Huyghe has written an article about this at Extraordinary Claim? Move the Goal Posts!

4) Using double standards in what they will accept as evidence. They will not accept anecdotal evidence for the paranormal because they consider it to be unreliable, but not surprisingly they will accept anecdotal evidence when it supports their position. Also, when psi experiments shows positive results well above, they will not accept it as evidence against psi. But when a psi experiment only shows chance results, they will accept that as evidence against psi.

5) Attacking the character of witnesses and undermining their credibility their evidence or testimonies can't be explained away. As we all know, when politicians can't win on the issues, they resort to character assassinations. Unfortunately, this is also what skeptics and debunkers tend to do as well. When evidence or testimony from key people can't be explained away or are irrefutable, skeptics will find ways to discredit

them such as character assassinations or grossly exaggerating and distorting trivial mistakes. This has especially been done with the direct eyewitnesses of the 1947 Roswell Incident, as Stanton Friedman, author of the famous Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a UFO often points out in his articles you can read at www.v-j-enterprises.com/sfhome.html.

6) Dismissing all evidence for the paranormal by classifying it either as anecdotal, untestable, unreplicable, or uncontrolled. Skeptics who wish to close their minds to any evidence, even after asking for it ironically, tend to do so by classifying it into one of the categories above. If the evidence is anecdotal, they will say that anecdotal evidence is worthless scientifically and untestable. If the evidence is in the form of scientific experiments, they will then say that it is unreplicable or uncontrolled.

Here are a list of traits that define the true skeptic vs. the pseudoskeptic.

True Skeptics / Open-Minded Skeptics

Questions everything and takes nothing on faith, even from cherished established institutions.

Asks questions to try to understand new things and are open to learning about them.

Applies critical examination and inquiry to all sides, including their own.

Withholds judgment and does not jump to rash conclusions.

Seeks the truth and considers it the highest aim.

Thinks in terms of possibilities rather than in preserving fixed views.

Fairly and objectively weighs evidence on all sides.

Acknowledges valid convincing evidence rather than ignoring or denying it.

Possess solid sharp common sense and reason.

Are able to adapt their paradigms to new evidence and update their hypothesis to fit the data.

When all conventional explanations for a phenomenon are ruled out, are able to accept paranormal ones.

Accepts that there are mysteries and revels in trying to understand them.

Views science as a tool and methodology, not as a religion or authority to be obeyed.

Understands the difference between the scientific process and the scientific establishment.

Acknowledges that the scientific establishment is subject to politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression, as all human based institutions are - and therefore must be critically examined and scrutinized, rather than taken on faith, especially in the light of contrary evidence to their claims.

Will admit they are wrong when the evidence calls for it.

PseudoSkeptics / Closed-Minded Skeptics

Does not question anything from established non-religious institutions, but takes whatever they say on faith and demands that others do the same.

Does not ask questions to try to understand new things, but judges them by whether they fit into orthodoxy.

Applies "critical thinking" only to that which opposes orthodoxy or materialism, but never to the status quo itself.

Immediately judges as false and debunks anything that contradicts their paradigm.

Are not interested in truth, evidence or facts, only in defending their views.

Cannot think in terms of possibilities, but sees their paradigms as fixed and constant.

Are willing to lie and deceive to discredit their opponents.

Automatically dismisses and denies all data that contradicts materialism and orthodoxy.

Are judgmental and quick to draw conclusions about things they know little or nothing about.

Scoffs and ridicules what they oppose instead of using objective analysis and examination.

When faced with evidence or facts they can't refute, uses semantics, word games and denial to try to obfuscate the issue.

Unable to adapt their paradigms to new evidence, and denies data which doesn't fit into them.

When all conventional explanations for an unexplainable phenomenon are ruled out, are still not able to accept paranormal ones.

Dislikes mystery and uncertainty, and insist that all unknown phenomena must have a mundane explanation.

Views the scientific establishment as a religion and authority to be taken on faith and never questioned or challenged. Does not understand the difference between the scientific process/methodology and the scientific establishment institution.

Assumes that the scientific establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression for no other reason than blind faith in authority.

Will never admit that they are wrong no matter what, regardless of evidence.

Wikipedia's original entry on pathological skepticism (before pseudoskeptics took it down) listed these defining behaviors of pseudoskeptics:

"The difference between pseudoskepticism and skepticism appear in the conduct of an individual's actions. Among the indications of pseudoskeptical actions are:

Resorting to various logical fallacies (usually in an attack against those disputing a theory).
The assumption of facts (such as, stating theories determine phenomena).
The obfuscation of facts.
The use of attractive or neutral euphemisms to disguise unpleasant facts concerning their own positions.
Insisting that fundamental framework and theory of science hardly change.
Unwavering belief that science is a consensus and run on majority rule.
Maintaining a stance of hostility and intolerance.
Instituting hurdles against new theories by "moving the goalposts".
Ignoring intellectual suppression of unorthodox theories.
Judging a theory or phenomena without investigation and insisting on ignoring the details thereafter."

In the SCEPCOP Forum, Steve Trueblue observed these five consistent patterns in pseudoskeptics:

"As a skilled observer you will also note that PseudoSkeptics:

Seldom, in fact almost never, ask questions, reflecting Zero Curiosity thus learning difficulties
Practice a very high level of self deception and mistakenly believe they can lie to adults as they did in childhood
Display markedly deficient reading and comprehension skills
Display inability to connect thoughts sequentially and plan an argument- often defeating their own case
Depend on bluster and bullying and name calling to make up for lack of argument content"

In short, these pseudoskeptics are materialist fundamentalists driven by fanatical beliefs and views which they seek to proselytize to the world. Regardless of facts or evidence, they ALWAYS start and end with the following dogmatic positions:

Paranormal claims are all bunk and cannot be true. There is no evidence for them.
Conspiracies are all false. There is no evidence for them. Official sources are not to be questioned.
Anything that challenges the status quo and materialism is wrong and must be

debunked.

Only natural materialistic explanations are acceptable. Paranormal ones are not.

They begin with those precepts and always come back to them, regardless of the facts or evidence in any investigation or debate, EVERYTIME. That's one consistent thing you will notice about them. And they will resort to playing games, ridicule, denial, even deliberate distortion, fabrication and connecting false dots to maintain these core positions. That's why they are not really capable of serious honest discussion. Instead, they play games and cheat at them in order to win. I've seen them do it time and time again. It doesn't matter how much proof or evidence you have. All of that is irrelevant to them. They seek only to validate their beliefs, not change their beliefs in accord with the facts or data.

They will never admit that they've lost, even though technically they have. When cornered by facts and reason, they resort to denial or ad hominem attacks. Or they even will spin your own arguments against you, without basis. It's like winning a chess game against an opponent, and even though the rules say they are checkmated, they still refuse to admit defeat. That's not fair, honest, or decent behavior.

For more on pseudoskeptical tactics, see [Zen and the Art of Debunkery and Stupid Skeptic Tricks](#).

The late Marcello Truzzi, former member of CSICOP and critic of pseudoskepticism, wrote an article about pseudoskeptics which you can read [about here](#).

One of the tell-tale signs of pseudoskeptical mentality is in the words they use when describing believers. If they describe them as: "delusional, irrational, gullible, charlatans, superstitious, wishful-thinking, primitive and child-like thinking", etc. then it's a strong indication of their a priori mentality.

PseudoSkeptics such as the CSICOP and JREF crowd are definitely not open minded truth seekers, but rather their words and behavior are that of automatic dismissing and denying that which doesn't fit into their paradigm. They are cynics who have closed their mind to anything that doesn't fit into their world view, dismissing all else as misperception, delusion, or fraud. But don't take my word for it, for if you read their own

writing and hear what they say, it's obvious from their own words and behavior, and from their tunnel-view of reality, as well as their righteous indignation of what's real and what's "quackery" (a word they love to use). They do not seek to understand, but to attack and discredit.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the term "pseudo" means "False or counterfeit; fake." These debunkers exhibit a false mask of skepticism. In actuality, they are cynics, debunkers, and deniers. They deny and dismiss all evidence that doesn't fit their views, whether scientific or anecdotal, no matter how credible or plentiful, and look for excuses to justify it. They are not about seeking truth or open-minded investigation, only in discrediting whatever doesn't fit into the orthodoxy/materialist paradigm.

Unfortunately, pseudoskeptic groups have not heeded the warnings and advice of one of their own heros, the late Carl Sagan:

"...The chief deficiency I see in the skeptical movement is its polarization: Us vs. Them -- the sense that we have a monopoly on the truth; that those other people who believe in all these stupid doctrines are morons; that if you're sensible, you'll listen to us; and if not, to hell with you. This is nonconstructive. It does not get our message across. It condemns us to permanent minority status." - Carl Sagan

"People are not stupid. They believe things for reasons. The last way for skeptics to get the attention of bright, curious, intelligent people is to belittle or condescend or to show arrogance toward their beliefs." - Carl Sagan

"The suppression of uncomfortable ideas may be common in religion or in politics, but it is not the path to knowledge, and there's no place for it in the endeavor of science." - Carl Sagan

These illogical ways of thinking are strange coming from people who pride themselves on their logic and rationality! Of course, flawed thinking such as the above can come from both believers and skeptics. That is why it is good to point them out to keep both sides in check.

Afterlife researcher Dr. Victor Zammit, describes how these debunkers reject what doesn't fit into their world view through the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

"Let's borrow a page from traditional psychology. When a skeptic receives information - say, scientific proof for the afterlife -- which is fundamentally inconsistent with his or her entrenched cherished beliefs, the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her beliefs to reduce and to offset the intense biological, emotional and mental anxiety. The intense anxiety is created by the information that the afterlife exists.

The skeptic's mind tries to resist and reject this new information (even if the information is the absolute truth) - hence the cognitive (the mind) 'dissonance' - between the new information - (i.e., the positive evidence for the afterlife) and the skeptic's own personal beliefs that the afterlife cannot exist.

Closed-minded skepticism is extremely difficult to shift because his/her skepticism is 'electrically wired' into the skeptic's neurological, psychological, intellectual and emotional belief system. Thus with absolute certainty, this skeptic inexorably loses all sense of empirical equanimity."

Dr. Zammit also hit it on the head about how pseudoskeptics overgeneralize and distort information:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

"Skeptics can be seen to overgeneralize saying for instance that because some mediums are fraudulent therefore all mediums are fraudulent.

Further, skeptics distort information saying that because it may be possible to reproduce certain phenomena by fraud - even at odds of one billion to one - that they have proven that fraud took place. In this sense, the skeptics find it impossible to transcend their 'metaprogram' (their overriding world view of reality) of materialistic beliefs."

As to why pseudoskeptics believe what they do, this author, who spent time undercover in a skeptical organization, might be able to shed some light on that:

http://www.scientificexploration.org/journal/jse_16_1_leiter.pdf

"A person who has been duped frequently in everyday life might learn by bitter experience to be cautious and wary. The reaction of those who have joined PhACT is however more dysfunctional. They have been wounded at a deeper level, to the extent that what was purported to be a valid philosophy of life, and in which they were heavily involved, turns out to be empty and useless, even damaging, in their eyes. Thus, they gravitate to what appears to them to be the ultimate non-faith-based philosophy, Science. Unfortunately, while they loudly proclaim their righteousness, based on their professed adherence to "hard science", they do so with the one thing no true scientist can afford to possess, a closed mind. Instead of becoming scientifically minded, they become adherents of scientism, the belief system in which science and only science has all the answers to everything.

This regrettable condition acts to preclude their unbiased consideration of phenomena on the cutting edge of science, which is not how a true scientist should behave. In fact, many "Skeptics" will not even read significantly into the literature on the subjects about which they are most skeptical. I have direct experience with this specific behavior on the part of a number of PhACT members. Initially, I attributed that behavior to just plain laziness, but lately I've begun to suspect that those individuals may actually have a phobia about reading material that is contrary to their own views. It seems entirely possible that they fear "contamination" from that exposure will eventually lead to (Gasp!) acceptance of the opposition's position. Such scientifically inclined, but psychologically scarred people tend to join Skeptics' organizations much as one might join any other support group, say, Alcoholics Anonymous. There they find comfort, consolation, and support amongst their own kind.

Anyone who has spent much time engaging members of Skeptics' organizations knows about their strong inclination toward ridicule and ad hominem criticism of those with differing viewpoints. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many members of PhACT have been rather offended by my position as someone who is skeptical of Skeptics. As the old adage states, "They can dish it out, but they can't take it."

In school, you are taught that "critical thinking" means to refute and ridicule anything that opposes the establishment or status quo, but never the status quo itself. A true skeptic can rise above that and apply skepticism and critical thought toward established orthodoxy, but a pseudo-skeptic cannot. Instead, the pseudo-skeptic follows the school system's form of "critical thinking", applying it only to those who oppose orthodoxy in defense of the status quo.

In that sense, they are in reality "establishment defenders" rather than true skeptics. That is why they NEVER challenge, criticize or scrutinize their government or any part of the establishment, including the pharmaceutical companies, CIA or FBI, even if logic, facts, evidence or moral cause dictates that they should.

To these establishment defenders, authority = truth, and as such is always blameless in their eyes. That is their religion, so hence, all their skills, talents and knowledge are used to serve their true God - orthodoxy. In their view, establishment authority can do no wrong, even if they murder, traffic drugs, steal, lie, stage terrorist attacks, start wars by funding both sides, etc.

What this means is that these pseudo-skeptics or establishment defenders do not serve truth as their master. As such, they are willing to lie and deceive to serve their masters (there are so many documented cases of this). Thus they are not "free" in any sense of the word, nor honest, which is sad.

This is why not only are they closed minded against anything to do with paranormal phenomena, but are vehemently opposed to all claims of government conspiracies as well, no matter how well supported, for it offends their "true master" (which is not truth).

Examples of famous pseudoskeptics and establishment defenders: (Check them all out and you will see that their actions fit the above description)

James Randi and his JREF crowd

Michael Shermer

CSICOP and their crowd

Penn and Teller and their "Bullshit" show (pun intended) which is an insult to one's intelligence

The Mythbusters

Phil Plait and his "Bad Astronomy" folks

Scientism – The Religion of Pseudoskeptics?

Now let me clarify something. Critics of pseudoskeptics have accused them of believing in Scientism – the belief that science is to be treated as an authority with all the answers and taken on faith, just like a religion is. In response, pseudoskeptics claim that science is a process of independent peer review and replication and therefore not a religion.

So then, is science a religion, you might ask? Well, yes and no. Technically, science is not a religion. It is a tool and methodology of obtaining logical conclusions through evidence and inquiry. As such, it is not an entity that holds positions or viewpoints, like people do. Therefore, science is not pro or anti-paranormal, anymore than a pencil, computer program or mathematical formula is.

However, the scientific establishment is another matter, because it involves people, politics, power, money, institutions and vested interests. And as such, politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression are naturally a part of it. Realists know and understand this. But for some reason pseudoskeptics don't.

The key fallacy that pseudoskeptics make is lumping the scientific process and the scientific establishment into one, and assuming that they are one and the same. That is the major fallacy of the organized skepticism movement, which consists of the JREF, CSICOP and Michael Shermer type crowd.

In doing so, they falsely assume that the science and medical establishment is objective

and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression. That's where their major mistake is. And as such, they deem the science and medical establishment as an unassailable authority that is not to be questioned or challenged. In that sense, they treat science as a religion. So even though they claim that science is not a religion, they still treat it as such, by holding the views of the science establishment as an unquestionable authority.

So, if researchers such as Dean Radin, Rupert Sheldrake or Dr. Gary Schwartz come up with evidence for psychic phenomena, it is automatically dismissed as invalid, simply because it challenges the orthodoxy of the science establishment, not because the experiments were not legit. And they will use any excuse to do so, including the lamest ones.

Likewise, when evidence comes up that vaccines, fluoride, aspartame or mercury dental fillings are dangerous and harmful, that evidence is suppressed and deemed inadmissible, simply because it threatens the medical establishment and its vested interests, not because the evidence is untrue.

By filtering out such contrary evidence, even when it is legit and valid, pseudoskeptics definitely are treating the science and medical establishment as a religion. And as we all know, religion is authority and faith based, not evidence based.

You see, no one likes to invest a lot of time and money into something, only to have it proven wrong or changed. And the science/medical establishment is no exception. They are people with political interests, not objective unbiased machines. So let's get real here.

You don't have to be educated to understand this. Anyone with common sense, street smarts, and real life experience knows this. But pseudoskeptics, in their fanaticism, ignore such common sense realities. They are fanatics, not realists.

Furthermore, organized skeptics like to tout "science" as a peer reviewed process of independent replication, and therefore totally reliable. In doing so, they treat it like a "democratic process" in which the majority of scientists decide what's true by agreeing

on it. This is another fallacy, because it assumes that most scientists are objective and unbiased, and free to say whatever they want without consequence.

But this is not the way the real world of money, power and politics works. Any realist knows that when you work for an institution or receive funding, you have to “tow the party line”, or else you are out. It’s that simple. Any scientist who says something that opposes the views of those he works for, will jeopardize his career and reputation. There are many real life examples of scientists and researchers who have lost funding or suffered damage to their career for espousing unorthodox positions, even if their position was legit and evidence-based.

Moreover, most people are not unbiased, open minded, or hold truth as the highest value. Instead, they are concerned with their image, reputation, career, funding, and hold rigid views that they feel safe and comfortable in. Many people do not like uncertainty or mystery. They want a world where things make sense and are predictable and well-defined. That’s why they are prone to fall into rigid unchanging belief systems. Why would scientists be any different. They may be more educated than the average person, sure, but they are humans, and humans have biases.

It is the truth seeker and freethinker who questions everything and does not hold any authority as truth, who is most likely to find the truth. Not the most educated or well connected with institutions.

Pseudoskeptics ignore all this, or are blind to it, because they are fanatics, not truth seekers or freethinkers. When you look at the overall picture, this becomes obvious.

Thus, the key difference in this area between the pseudoskeptic and the truth seeker/freethinker, is that the former holds the science/medical establishment as a religion of unquestionable authority, whereas the latter does not, and recognizes it for what it is – an institution with vested interests, politics, power, money, control and censorship that is not above suppressing that which threatens it.

Anyone who examines the material produced by pseudoskeptics can see this apparent pattern. They hold everything said by the science/medical establishment as

unassailable truth and authority, and never question or scrutinize it, ever, while automatically dismissing anything that opposes it. That's not skepticism. It's thought control, mind control, and suppression of truth.

Now, let me clarify something. It is NOT my position to argue that all paranormal claims are true. In fact, I happen to be skeptical of many claims myself. Instead, I am for open minded inquiry and honestly weighing the evidence. Not all paranormal claims are true, but some are backed by a lot more evidence than others. For example, ESP and ghosts are backed by a much higher percentage of testimonials than the Loch Ness Monster is. So, I argue that the evidence for paranormal phenomena should be considered and investigated as possibilities rather than rejected automatically ruled out just because it doesn't fit in with prevailing beliefs and world views. I do not claim to have all the answers to all the paranormal mysteries. However, based on my experience and research, I will argue that the overwhelming evidence as a whole points to the existence of some sort of metaphysical reality that exists, and that at least some paranormal claims have a basis in reality. My position is that SOME types of paranormal phenomena which are backed by evidence and widespread testimonials (e.g. ESP, Psi, Telepathy, NDE's) have something to them other than mere hallucination or delusion.

Very few people are willing to cast their skepticism on all sides, including their own beliefs. Most people, including the pseudoskeptics, seek to validate what they already believe, and reject the data that would cause them to change their beliefs. We at SCEPCOP try to avoid this by applying true skepticism to all sides, including our own, and basing our conclusions on the data itself rather than on our subjective emotional beliefs.

With that, let's begin the debunking of their common arguments.

Note: I have assigned numbers to each pseudoskeptical argument so that I can reference them throughout this book.

Note: Although CSICOP has changed its name to CSI, I will refer to it as CSICOP here because that is still what most people know it as.

"I shall not commit the fashionable stupidity of regarding everything I cannot explain as a fraud."

- Carl Gustav Jung

"It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware."

– Albert Einstein

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes."

- Marcel Proust, French novelist

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

- Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

“There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.”

- Søren Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher

“Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world.”

- Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher

Introduction

Dear Reader,

Greetings. My name is Winston Wu. I am a researcher and explorer of the paranormal, psychic phenomena, metaphysics, quantum physics, consciousness research, realms of higher consciousness, and religion/philosophy. This book rebuts and critiques the most common arguments made by pseudoskeptics (those who claim to be skeptics but in fact are cynics, debunkers, scoffers) regarding paranormal and psychic phenomena, showing the flaws and fallacies in their thinking, philosophy and methodology. I've listed their common arguments one-by-one and pointed out the fallacies, flaws and problems in them based on years of experience in debating with them.

The Paranormal is one of the most exciting frontiers today. Research into Consciousness, Quantum Physics and Psychic Phenomena, etc. explores venues that are unlocking the mysteries of the universe and gateways to other dimensions or levels of reality and consciousness. These provide deeper insights into a larger nature of reality, revealing insights into the meaning of existence and spawning hope for a better future in which humanity's consciousness and awareness are elevated to new heights, transcending greed, lust for power, hatred, violence, ignorance, and the confines of a materialistic paradigm that keeps us living in fear. Therefore, the study of the Paranormal is a key stepping stone for humanity's next stage of evolution.

However, standing in the way are groups of organized fundamentalists who call themselves "skeptics" but in reality are dogmatic defenders of establishment and materialistic reductionistic science who reject and deny anything which challenges that. They are pseudoskeptics cause their actions and behaviors are the antithesis to what the word skepticism really means. (More on that later)

The pseudoskepticism movement includes organizations such as CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), now known as CSI (Committee for Skeptical Inquiry), JREF (James Randi Educational Foundation) and professional Skeptics such as Michael Shermer of Skeptic Magazine, as well as many smaller groups and websites. In media reports and programs on paranormal

phenomena, these skeptics are often presented as the final authorities on the matter and go virtually unchallenged. And unfortunately, most paranormal/psychic researchers have neither the time nor interest to debate these debunkers.

And that's where we come in. This book's objective is to expose and debunk the fallacies, flaws and misinformation of the pseudoskepticism movement.

Now it's our turn to form a counter movement and coalition. Enter SCEPCOP – The Scientific Committee to Evaluate PseudoSkeptical Criticism of the Paranormal. As CSICOP was formed to "police the claims of psi", SCEPCOP now in turn acts to "police the cynicism of pseudoskeptics". We will debunk their arguments, and reveal their fallacies, misinformation, censorship, denial, inconsistencies, pseudo-dogmas posing as "rules of logic" and double standards, showing that they are not objective truth seekers, but biased debunkers.

Just to state for the record though, opposing pseudoskepticism does NOT mean that SCEPCOP endorses every crackpot claim, theory and fantasy out there. Not at all. We believe in applying equal skepticism to both sides, as well as the objective weighing of evidence, for as you might expect, some claims and phenomenon have a lot of solid evidence to back it up, while others have little or none.

First though, let me tell you how I came to write this book.

How this book came to be written

Possessing a vivid imagination and the ability to think outside the box, I've always been unimpressed with mundane ordinary life and materialistic values. Thus I've always aspired to reach higher, for deeper meaning and understanding, and the bigger picture. Thus I've always had an interest in esoteric things, and been drawn to spirituality, religion, and the search for meaning. I started out during childhood as an Evangelical Christian fundamentalist, which gave me the structure and solid sense of purpose that I needed at the time. When I turned 19, I felt that the absolutist doctrines of my faith were too limiting and narrow minded for me, and not allowing me to learn anything new without fear. This began a slow de-conversion process which led me to become

Agnostic for a while. You can read my story about my deconversion entitled *My Rise to Christianity and Transcendence From It*. (I also have another book in similar form to this one debunking and refuting main Christian arguments entitled *Debunking Christian Circular Arguments and Assumptions*)

Since then, I have always been a critical opponent of brainwashing tactics, after having been brainwashed myself a number of times, but learning from it each time. As a result, I've written various debunking articles. See a list of them [here](#).

After my Christian deconversion, I found that the Atheist paradigm didn't have the answers to life's mysteries or even to unexplained phenomena either. I knew that its paradigm was insufficient as well. Neither Atheism nor Evangelical Christianity seemed adequate, but oddly enough many people seem to think that those are the only two belief systems to choose from. Realizing that there were way too many things that couldn't be explained by conventional or scientific explanations, I started looking for answers in non-organized forms of spirituality. After further research and questioning, I discovered many fascinating things and new paradigms that fit the unexplained data, which gave me a more comprehensive view of reality and spirituality. I discovered that there was indeed powerful evidence (some of which is irrefutable) that some paranormal phenomena are genuine and do have a basis, both scientifically and in terms of anecdotal evidence.

To try to gain an understanding of the other side of the issue, (which is what you should do when you want to learn something in depth) I went to skeptics to ask what they had to say and also read some of their literature. I found that what they had to say made sense on the surface, but was very different than what I heard from the literature about paranormal phenomena, accounts of paranormal experiences from ordinary people (some of which I know and trust), and my own experiences. In order to try to make sense of such different but arguable views, I tried to sift through the details and the evidence. What I found was that although both skeptics and believers can be closed-minded and tend to rationalize away what they don't want to believe, in either case the objective evidence for some of the paranormal was incredibly strong and undeniable.

As I became more educated and informed of the evidence for different types of paranormal phenomena, I presented this to skeptics both on message boards and internet newsgroups. What resulted was an endless charade of arguments on both sides, with each side bringing up facts that support their side while denying the facts of

the other side. This is typical of debates in general, no doubt, but since there were so many types of paranormal phenomena, the topic range was broad and diverse enough to make continuous and interesting discussions. Consequently, the discussions dragged on much longer than expected. Not only were there so many topics to discuss, but I kept finding more and more quality evidence to support my view each time I looked. All this became a fascinating exercise in the quest for truth.

During the discussions and debates, I was led to skeptical material such as Professor Bob Carroll's *The Skeptic's Dictionary*, editions of *Skeptical Inquirer* (published by CSICOP), articles by the infamous paranormal debunker James Randi, and others. Over time, I developed a strong recognition and grasp of their system of philosophical arguments and sensed the patterns in them. After hearing almost all the arguments they used, I learned how to respond to them to the point of it being second nature to me. I knew their strengths and weaknesses, just as an experienced chess player understood the strengths and weaknesses of the positions of his opponent's pieces. For almost three years, I debated skeptics ranging from honest doubters looking for truth (like me), to those who were clearly cynics masquerading as skeptics having already made up their minds before looking at the evidence.

These skeptics included cynics, debunkers, Atheists, Humanists, certain scientists bent on materialistic reductionist world views, those for whom science is their God (even though they won't admit it), scientific materialists, haters of religion, etc. Now we call them "pseudoskeptics" because although they pose as skeptics, their skepticism is "pseudo" meaning "False or counterfeit; fake." (American Heritage Dictionary) Hence the title of this book.

Eventually, I realized that their skepticism was not about an open inquiry for truth, but rather a philosophy they used to manipulate data to fit their beliefs and reject anything outside of it on purely subjective grounds. This philosophy was pseudo-intellectual in nature and used to discredit and invalidate both claimants and evidence. Oddly, these skeptics seem to think that they can use semantics and rules from this philosophy to erase evidence from reality! They think that they can invalidate real-life objective events and evidence of a paranormal nature by putting labels on them or quoting some theorem or axiom such as "anecdotal evidence is invalid", "appeal to authority", "ad populum fallacy argument" etc. In effect, they attempt to use semantics to erase objective reality. Unfortunately for them, reality doesn't work that way.

It was obvious that these skeptics were not seeking the truth nor were they open to it.

Instead, they were about systematically trying to debunk everything that didn't fit in with their a priori staunch materialistic views. Therefore, they did not ask questions of an exploratory nature, but rather, they taunted and attacked believers and made claims and judgments about their paranormal experiences. They had already made up their minds beforehand, and would only accept evidence that fit their conclusions. A true skeptic and truth-seeker analyzes both sides and updates his views and opinions to conform with the facts, while a pseudoskeptic on the other hand manipulates the facts to fit into their beliefs, using selective attention as well.

Then I suddenly realized at the time that no books or in-depth analyses have been written to directly counter the arguments and philosophy of organized skeptics and debunkers. There were a few articles written about closed-minded skeptics in general, but no in-depth point by point critique or debunking of their arguments. For almost every other organized belief system, there are books written analyzing its precepts and doctrines, but not for organized skepticism. Therefore, I decided to be the first to write such a thing, making use of the knowledge I gained over the years and my debating skills. I felt that being the first in something was an accomplishment that I would be inspired to do. And that's how this book came to be written back in 2001.

When it was first released, it became widely acclaimed in the paranormal community as groundbreaking, effective and the first of its kind. It led to my appearance on several radio shows such as Forbidden Truth by my friend Michael Goodspeed, The Clyde Lewis Show (KOTK 1080 AM) in Portland, Oregon, and Ghostly Talk Radio (you can listen to that interview in the archive section of their website at www.ghostlytalk.com or on YouTube here). Later, due to widespread recognition, I was invited to an international conference as a guest speaker at the Mysteries of the World theme park in Switzerland, and to a public debate with skeptics in New York.

Of course, not surprisingly the skeptics later issued a piece to debunk this book. A skeptic named Paul Sandoval published his counter-piece to it, which you can download [here](#). As you can see from it, he simply does more of the same, twisting words into "logical fallacies", which anyone can do to anyone they disagree with, putting labels on things, and twisting semantics to his advantage, none of which disproves any of the facts, examples and evidence I cited, nor erases evidence for paranormal phenomena from existence. People who do this are "in their own world", so to speak. (To see a great example of word games from pseudoskeptics that have nothing to do with reality, see this online exchange I had with one in which he was proven to have lied several times beyond any shadow of doubt.)

Years later in 2009, I formed a coalition and website called SCEPCOP – Scientific Committee to Evaluate Pseudoskeptical Criticism of the Paranormal, which was the world's first organized counter-skeptic group created to counter CSICOP, JREF, etc. Although at this time SCEPCOP is in its infancy, its popularity has soared among the Paranormal community and received attention from the Skeptic camp as well. (See a list of paranormal websites and blogs announcing SCEPCOP [here](#)) And in August of 2009, the popular paranormal magazine Atlantis Rising did an article on SCEPCOP in issue 77, which you can download [here](#) in PDF format. (see pages 24, 26 and 61)

With the exception of sensational pro-paranormal programs, skeptics are often given the chance to present their arguments and explanations in the media, national magazines, and television programs, without rebuttal from the other side, even when their explanations are insufficient to explain all the data. As a result, there is often an imbalance in the presentation of paranormal and psychic phenomena in the media, leaving most viewers and believers uninformed. This book attempts to counteract the imbalance. It is written both for the education and knowledge of the believer who deals with skeptics, and for skeptics who are willing to hear counter-arguments to their positions.

Now let me clarify that I have nothing against honest true skepticism. It is good to have a healthy dose of skepticism to protect one from scams, con artists, misleading advertising, misleading claims, propaganda, brainwashing, jumping to conclusions, etc. But when closed-minded cynicism comes masquerading as skepticism, it becomes a block to truth finding and open-minded investigation. However, those new to this subject may not be able to discern the difference between open honest skepticism and closed-minded pseudoskepticism. Therefore, let us differentiate between the two.

PseudoSkeptics vs. True Skeptics: Behaviors and Tactics

According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, a skeptic is:

"One who is yet undecided as to what is true; one who is looking or inquiring for what is true; an inquirer after facts or reasons."

Pyrrho, the founder of "Skepticism", intended for it to be about open inquiry and suspension of judgment.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"In classical philosophy, skepticism refers to the teachings and the traits of the 'Skeptikoi', a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they 'asserted nothing but only opined.' (Liddell and Scott) In this sense, philosophical skepticism, or Pyrrhonism, is the philosophical position that one should suspend judgment in investigations.[1]"

But rather than inquiring, or asking questions to try to understand something, they seek to debunk, discredit and ridicule anything that doesn't fit into their belief system. And rather than suspending judgment, they make accusations of fraud and delusion of all paranormal claimants. They are PROSECUTORS, not investigators. Hence, we call them pseudoskeptics (a term coined by the late Marcello Truzzi) for their actions and behaviors are the complete antithesis of what skepticism truly means.

According to WikiSynergy:

Pseudoskepticism (or pseudoskepticism) is defined as thinking that claims to be Skeptical but is actually faith-based disbelief. Because real skepticism is a justifiable position, pseudoskepticism may also be defined as making pseudoscientific arguments in pursuit of a skeptical agenda.

Pseudoskepticism is a general term which encompasses two types of faith-based disbelief: making positive claims that something is wrong or unreal without evidence (positive disbelief), and rejecting sufficient evidence.

A "true skeptic" objectively inquires and seeks evidence, challenging all sides including their own beliefs (see here). But these pseudoskeptics do anything but. As someone

observed to me:

"The original definition of skeptic was a person who questions ALL beliefs, facts, and points-of-view. A healthy perspective in my opinion. Today's common definition of skeptic is someone who questions any belief that strays outside of the status quo, yet leaving the status quo itself completely unquestioned. Kind of a juvenile and intellectually lazy practice in my opinion."

Even Wikipedia indirectly admits that modern skepticism is really about rejecting new information:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"The word skepticism can characterize a position on a single claim, but in scholastic circles more frequently describes a lasting mind-set and an approach to accepting or rejecting new information."

And this insightful YouTuber eloquently hit the bull's eye with this comment:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vks49Bfn544>

"What skeptics fail to understand is that skepticism involves being skeptical of your own position, it does not mean just being skeptical of that which you do not believe in, otherwise we are all skeptics and that renders their use of the term "skeptic" meaningless. A true skeptic casts skepticism on their own position as well. Since the Randi crowd do not employ skepticism in this respect then they are fairly termed pseudo skeptics and demean the term skepticism."

So, pseudoskeptics have hijacked the term "skeptic" to refer to the one who suppresses, rather than the one who "doubts or questions" which it is supposed to refer to. As such, a "skeptic" now refers to the ridiculer, debunker and discreditor of the "questioner" (who is the true skeptic) rather than to the questioner himself. In other words, the new "skeptic" is someone who debunks a "skeptic" by wearing the hat of the person they are out to debunk, in effect impersonating them! It's a highly deceptive form

of role reversal that is very sneaky and devious, no doubt.

And furthermore, it seems way too calculated and militant to be due to some accidental misunderstanding, ignorance or closed mindedness. Hijacking a word to mean its opposite seems more like part of some sort of agenda, perhaps a deliberate disinformation campaign or cultural mind control. If that sounds terrible, well, we are here to expose that thank goodness.

In truth and by their actions, these pseudoskeptics are defenders of the status quo and materialism. They are fanatics and dogmatists who have no regard for facts, evidence or truth, but have an a priori faith-based belief that paranormal phenomena is impossible and therefore set out to debunk it, not investigate it. And they will distort, dismiss and obfuscate to get their way. Thus, they generally have no objectivity toward evidence, but bigotry and emotional fanaticism.

If you're wondering if this is true, then ask yourself this: Why do those who attack, ridicule and deny all paranormal claims also usually deny all conspiracies and facts in support of them, while dogmatically accepting all propaganda by the media and establishment? Have you ever seen a paranormal debunker like James Randi, Michael Shermer or CSICOP's Skeptical Inquirer challenge anything official held by the status quo at all, period? If not, what does that tell you? Think about it.

And that's what a "skeptic" is today in the media and pop culture. Obviously this means that their skepticism is highly selective and subjective, not distributed equally in all directions, hence an extreme bias exists in them rather than any form of objectivity. Skepticism should be a tool and method of inquiry to help one learn things and find truth, not be used as a cover to defend one's own rigid narrow views. Questioning things and seeking answers helps one learn things, but trying to debunk everything outside your world view doesn't.

Dean Radin, who spent many years studying parapsychology and skeptical views, concluded the same in his acclaimed book *Entangled Minds*: (pages 10-11)

"Some skeptics pushed doubt to extremes and insisted that positive evidence was

always due to mistakes or intentional fraud. As I saw it, within this dialectic one side was struggling to understand the depths of inner space by probing Nature with clever questions. The other was trying to maintain the status quo through passionate, and sometimes vicious, denial. The former were willing to take risks to advance knowledge, the latter were naysayers interested mainly in defending dogma."

Chris Carter, author of *Parapsychology and the Skeptics*, accurately described the pseudoskeptics' true motivations in this interview:

<http://www.skeptiko.com/blog/?p=8>

"You have to remember that the argument is not really about the evidence. The argument is about their assumptions and their preconceptions. Their preconceptions are, with these sort of phenomena, that they don't make any sense and challenge their world view. So, they're going to do anything they possibly can to dismiss evidence that challenges their preconceptions."

The late great author Robert Anton Wilson observed the same regarding pseudoskeptics, calling them "fundamentalist materialists" and "irrational rationalists" in this interview:

http://www.nii.net/~obie/1988_interview.htm

"DAB: One of your recent books is *The New Inquisition: Irrational Rationalism and the Citadel of Science*. Maybe you could tell us a little bit about this book.

RAW: I coined the term irrational rationalism because those people claim to be rationalists, but they're governed by such a heavy body of taboos. They're so fearful, and so hostile, and so narrow, and frightened, and uptight and dogmatic. I thought it was a fascinating paradox: irrational rationalists. Later on I found out I didn't invent that. Somebody else who wrote an article on CSICOP, that's the group they all belong to: Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. Somebody else who wrote about them also used the term irrational rationalism. It's a hard term to resist

when you think about those people.

I wrote this book because I got tired satirizing fundamentalist Christianity, I had done enough of that in my other books. I decided to satirize fundamentalist materialism for a change, because the two are equally comical. All fundamentalism is comical, unless you believe in it, in which case you'd become a fanatic yourself, and want everybody else to share your fundamentalism. But if you're not a fundamentalist yourself, fundamentalists are the funniest people on the planet. The materialist fundamentalists are funnier than the Christian fundamentalists, because they think they're rational!

DAB: They call themselves skeptical.

RAW: Yes, but they're not skeptical! They're never skeptical about anything except the things they have a prejudice against. None of them ever says anything skeptical about the AMA, or about anything in establishment science or any entrenched dogma. They're only skeptical about new ideas that frighten them. They're actually dogmatically committed to what they were taught when they were in college, which was about 1948-53, somewhere in that period. If you go back and study what was being taught in college in those days as the latest scientific theories, you find out that's what these people still believe. They haven't had a new idea in 30 years, that's all that happened to them. They just rigidified, they crystallized around 1960."

As Wilson stated, these pseudoskeptics are fundamentalists on the opposite extreme end of Christian fundamentalism in terms of their black and white thinking. Here is an example that demonstrates this. A popular book among skeptics is Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark*. The mere title of the book and its cover (which you can see by clicking the link to it) demonstrates this analogy. The world is seen as "demon haunted" just as in Christianity, with the majority of people living in the "dark", believing in superstition and religion, but ignorant of science. While, on the other hand, those who rely on science and are skeptics are the "candle in the dark" or the "light of the world" in Christian Gospel terms. This is the same kind of black and white thinking that puts everyone into two categories, in the light and in the dark, that Christian fundamentalists use as well. In my opinion, it's unhealthy thinking to have belief systems like that.

It is interesting to note that while Carl Sagan is a great teacher of astronomy and

science, he has inadequate knowledge and experience with paranormal phenomena. This is demonstrated by the fact that in his book *The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark* Sagan devotes a big chapter to debunking the Alien Abduction phenomenon, yet not once does he even personally investigate or interview any abductees at all, like an honest open-minded investigator or truth seeker would. On the other hand, researchers like Harvard Professor John Mack (author of *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens*) and Budd Hopkins (author of *Missing Time*) have done extensive interviews and investigations with abductees for their book, which led them to the conclusion that there was more to the phenomenon than just the “all in the brain” or sleep paralysis. In fact, Mack has personally investigated 76 abductee cases during the course of four years. But how many did Sagan investigate? Zero. Therefore, one ought to give those researchers more credence than skeptics like Sagan who just dismiss the subject off-hand without any deep investigation for truth.

Of course, all pseudoskeptics will claim to be true skeptics, just like all high pressured salesmen claim to not be high pressure, all liars and con artists claim to be sincere, and all politicians claim to be honest. But as you know, ACTIONS speak louder than words, so the proof of what they are is in their ACTIONS, not words. If a salesman for example, told you "I am not a high pressure salesman" but then proceeds to pressure you to buy his product/service, hounding you without end and not taking no for an answer, then what do you believe, his words or his actions? Likewise, when a self described skeptic tells you that he is a true skeptic who is open to evidence, yet he displays all the characteristics, traits and behaviors of a pseudoskeptic, then do you listen to his words or his actions? The answer is obvious.

Thus, regardless of what they claim about themselves, if they exhibit the follow traits and characteristics, then they fall into the category of “pseudoskeptics”.

1) Ignoring facts and evidence that don't fit into their preconceived world view, rather than updating their beliefs to conform to the facts, which is more logical. (e.g. “It can't be, therefore it isn't!”) This is known as the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance.

2) Trying to force materialistic explanations, even if they're false, to account for a paranormal event regardless of whether they fit the data. For example, using “cold reading” to explain the amazing accuracy of a psychic reading when no known cold reading technique could account for the facts and circumstances. (see Argument # 16)

3) Moving the goal posts or raising the bar whenever their criteria for evidence is met. For example, a skeptic wants evidence for psi in the form of controlled experiments rather than anecdotal evidence. When this evidence is presented, he will then raise the bar and demand that the experiments be repeatable by other researchers. When this is done, then he will either attack the researchers integrity and character, attack their methods, or demand a report of every detail and minute of the experiment or else he will contend that some unmentioned lack of controls must have been the culprit to explain the positive psi results, etc. He will always find some excuse due to his already made-up mindset. Patrick Huyghe has written an article about this at Extraordinary Claim? Move the Goal Posts!

4) Using double standards in what they will accept as evidence. They will not accept anecdotal evidence for the paranormal because they consider it to be unreliable, but not surprisingly they will accept anecdotal evidence when it supports their position. Also, when psi experiments shows positive results well above, they will not accept it as evidence against psi. But when a psi experiment only shows chance results, they will accept that as evidence against psi.

5) Attacking the character of witnesses and undermining their credibility their evidence or testimonies can't be explained away. As we all know, when politicians can't win on the issues, they resort to character assassinations. Unfortunately, this is also what skeptics and debunkers tend to do as well. When evidence or testimony from key people can't be explained away or are irrefutable, skeptics will find ways to discredit them such as character assassinations or grossly exaggerating and distorting trivial mistakes. This has especially been done with the direct eyewitnesses of the 1947 Roswell Incident, as Stanton Friedman, author of the famous Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a UFO often points out in his articles you can read at www.v-j-enterprises.com/sfhome.html.

6) Dismissing all evidence for the paranormal by classifying it either as anecdotal, untestable, unreplicable, or uncontrolled. Skeptics who wish to close their minds to any evidence, even after asking for it ironically, tend to do so by classifying it into one of the categories above. If the evidence is anecdotal, they will say that anecdotal evidence is worthless scientifically and untestable. If the evidence is in the form of scientific experiments, they will then say that it is unreplicable or uncontrolled.

Here are a list of traits that define the true skeptic vs. the pseudoskeptic.

True Skeptics / Open-Minded Skeptics

Questions everything and takes nothing on faith, even from cherished established institutions.

Asks questions to try to understand new things and are open to learning about them.

Applies critical examination and inquiry to all sides, including their own.

Withholds judgment and does not jump to rash conclusions.

Seeks the truth and considers it the highest aim.

Thinks in terms of possibilities rather than in preserving fixed views.

Fairly and objectively weighs evidence on all sides.

Acknowledges valid convincing evidence rather than ignoring or denying it.

Possess solid sharp common sense and reason.

Are able to adapt their paradigms to new evidence and update their hypothesis to fit the data.

When all conventional explanations for a phenomenon are ruled out, are able to accept paranormal ones.

Accepts that there are mysteries and revels in trying to understand them.

Views science as a tool and methodology, not as a religion or authority to be obeyed.

Understands the difference between the scientific process and the scientific establishment.

Acknowledges that the scientific establishment is subject to politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression, as all human based institutions are - and therefore must be critically examined and scrutinized, rather than taken on faith, especially in the light of contrary evidence to their claims.

Will admit they are wrong when the evidence calls for it.

PseudoSkeptics / Closed-Minded Skeptics

Does not question anything from established non-religious institutions, but takes whatever they say on faith and demands that others do the same.

Does not ask questions to try to understand new things, but judges them by whether they fit into orthodoxy.

Applies "critical thinking" only to that which opposes orthodoxy or materialism, but never to the status quo itself.

Immediately judges as false and debunks anything that contradicts their paradigm.

Are not interested in truth, evidence or facts, only in defending their views.

Cannot think in terms of possibilities, but sees their paradigms as fixed and constant.

Are willing to lie and deceive to discredit their opponents.

Automatically dismisses and denies all data that contradicts materialism and orthodoxy.

Are judgmental and quick to draw conclusions about things they know little or nothing

about.

Scoffs and ridicules what they oppose instead of using objective analysis and examination.

When faced with evidence or facts they can't refute, uses semantics, word games and denial to try to obfuscate the issue.

Unable to adapt their paradigms to new evidence, and denies data which doesn't fit into them.

When all conventional explanations for an unexplainable phenomenon are ruled out, are still not able to accept paranormal ones.

Dislikes mystery and uncertainty, and insist that all unknown phenomena must have a mundane explanation.

Views the scientific establishment as a religion and authority to be taken on faith and never questioned or challenged. Does not understand the difference between the scientific process/methodology and the scientific establishment institution.

Assumes that the scientific establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression for no other reason than blind faith in authority.

Will never admit that they are wrong no matter what, regardless of evidence.

Wikipedia's original entry on pathological skepticism (before pseudoskeptics took it down) listed these defining behaviors of pseudoskeptics:

"The difference between pseudoskepticism and skepticism appear in the conduct of an individual's actions. Among the indications of pseudoskeptical actions are:

Resorting to various logical fallacies (usually in an attack against those disputing a theory).

The assumption of facts (such as, stating theories determine phenomena).

The obfuscation of facts.

The use of attractive or neutral euphemisms to disguise unpleasant facts concerning their own positions.

Insisting that fundamental framework and theory of science hardly change.

Unwavering belief that science is a consensus and run on majority rule.

Maintaining a stance of hostility and intolerance.

Instituting hurdles against new theories by "moving the goalposts".

Ignoring intellectual suppression of unorthodox theories.

Judging a theory or phenomena without investigation and insisting on ignoring the details thereafter."

In the SCEPCOP Forum, Steve Trueblue observed these five consistent patterns in

pseudoskeptics:

"As a skilled observer you will also note that PseudoSkeptics:

Seldom, in fact almost never, ask questions, reflecting Zero Curiosity thus learning difficulties

Practice a very high level of self deception and mistakenly believe they can lie to adults as they did in childhood

Display markedly deficient reading and comprehension skills

Display inability to connect thoughts sequentially and plan an argument- often defeating their own case

Depend on bluster and bullying and name calling to make up for lack of argument content"

In short, these pseudoskeptics are materialist fundamentalists driven by fanatical beliefs and views which they seek to proselytize to the world. Regardless of facts or evidence, they ALWAYS start and end with the following dogmatic positions:

Paranormal claims are all bunk and cannot be true. There is no evidence for them. Conspiracies are all false. There is no evidence for them. Official sources are not to be questioned.

Anything that challenges the status quo and materialism is wrong and must be debunked.

Only natural materialistic explanations are acceptable. Paranormal ones are not.

They begin with those precepts and always come back to them, regardless of the facts or evidence in any investigation or debate, EVERYTIME. That's one consistent thing you will notice about them. And they will resort to playing games, ridicule, denial, even deliberate distortion, fabrication and connecting false dots to maintain these core positions. That's why they are not really capable of serious honest discussion. Instead, they play games and cheat at them in order to win. I've seen them do it time and time again. It doesn't matter how much proof or evidence you have. All of that is irrelevant to them. They seek only to validate their beliefs, not change their beliefs in accord with the facts or data.

They will never admit that they've lost, even though technically they have. When

cornered by facts and reason, they resort to denial or ad hominem attacks. Or they even will spin your own arguments against you, without basis. It's like winning a chess game against an opponent, and even though the rules say they are checkmated, they still refuse to admit defeat. That's not fair, honest, or decent behavior.

For more on pseudoskeptical tactics, see [Zen and the Art of Debunkery and Stupid Skeptic Tricks](#).

The late Marcello Truzzi, former member of CSICOP and critic of pseudoskepticism, wrote an article about pseudoskeptics which you can read about [here](#).

One of the tell-tale signs of pseudoskeptical mentality is in the words they use when describing believers. If they describe them as: “delusional, irrational, gullible, charlatans, superstitious, wishful-thinking, primitive and child-like thinking”, etc. then it's a strong indication of their a priori mentality.

PseudoSkeptics such as the CSICOP and JREF crowd are definitely not open minded truth seekers, but rather their words and behavior are that of automatic dismissing and denying that which doesn't fit into their paradigm. They are cynics who have closed their mind to anything that doesn't fit into their world view, dismissing all else as misperception, delusion, or fraud. But don't take my word for it, for if you read their own writing and hear what they say, it's obvious from their own words and behavior, and from their tunnel-view of reality, as well as their righteous indignation of what's real and what's “quackery” (a word they love to use). They do not seek to understand, but to attack and discredit.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, the term “pseudo” means “False or counterfeit; fake.” These debunkers exhibit a false mask of skepticism. In actuality, they are cynics, debunkers, and deniers. They deny and dismiss all evidence that doesn't fit their views, whether scientific or anecdotal, no matter how credible or plentiful, and look for excuses to justify it. They are not about seeking truth or open-minded investigation, only in discrediting whatever doesn't fit into the orthodoxy/materialist paradigm.

Unfortunately, pseudoskeptic groups have not heeded the warnings and advice of one

of their own heros, the late Carl Sagan:

"...The chief deficiency I see in the skeptical movement is its polarization: Us vs. Them -- the sense that we have a monopoly on the truth; that those other people who believe in all these stupid doctrines are morons; that if you're sensible, you'll listen to us; and if not, to hell with you. This is nonconstructive. It does not get our message across. It condemns us to permanent minority status." - Carl Sagan

"People are not stupid. They believe things for reasons. The last way for skeptics to get the attention of bright, curious, intelligent people is to belittle or condescend or to show arrogance toward their beliefs." - Carl Sagan

"The suppression of uncomfortable ideas may be common in religion or in politics, but it is not the path to knowledge, and there's no place for it in the endeavor of science." - Carl Sagan

These illogical ways of thinking are strange coming from people who pride themselves on their logic and rationality! Of course, flawed thinking such as the above can come from both believers and skeptics. That is why it is good to point them out to keep both sides in check.

Afterlife researcher Dr. Victor Zammit, describes how these debunkers reject what doesn't fit into their world view through the process of rationalization through cognitive dissonance:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

"Let's borrow a page from traditional psychology. When a skeptic receives information - say, scientific proof for the afterlife -- which is fundamentally inconsistent with his or her entrenched cherished beliefs, the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her beliefs to reduce and to offset the intense biological, emotional and mental anxiety. The intense anxiety is created by the information that the afterlife exists.

The skeptic's mind tries to resist and reject this new information (even if the information is the absolute truth) - hence the cognitive (the mind) 'dissonance' - between the new information - (i.e., the positive evidence for the afterlife) and the skeptic's own personal beliefs that the afterlife cannot exist.

Closed-minded skepticism is extremely difficult to shift because his/her skepticism is 'electrically wired' into the skeptic's neurological, psychological, intellectual and emotional belief system. Thus with absolute certainty, this skeptic inexorably loses all sense of empirical equanimity."

Dr. Zammit also hit it on the head about how pseudoskeptics overgeneralize and distort information:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

"Skeptics can be seen to overgeneralize saying for instance that because some mediums are fraudulent therefore all mediums are fraudulent.

Further, skeptics distort information saying that because it may be possible to reproduce certain phenomena by fraud - even at odds of one billion to one - that they have proven that fraud took place. In this sense, the skeptics find it impossible to transcend their 'metaprogram' (their overriding world view of reality) of materialistic beliefs."

As to why pseudoskeptics believe what they do, this author, who spent time undercover in a skeptical organization, might be able to shed some light on that:

http://www.scientificexploration.org/journal/jse_16_1_leiter.pdf

"A person who has been duped frequently in everyday life might learn by bitter experience to be cautious and wary. The reaction of those who have joined PhACT is however more dysfunctional. They have been wounded at a deeper level, to the extent that what was purported to be a valid philosophy of life, and in which they were heavily involved, turns out to be empty and useless, even damaging, in their eyes. Thus, they gravitate to what appears to them to be the ultimate non-faith-based philosophy, Science. Unfortunately, while they loudly proclaim their righteousness, based on their professed adherence to "hard science", they do so with the one thing no true scientist can afford to possess, a closed mind. Instead of becoming scientifically minded, they become adherents of scientism, the belief system in which science and only science has all the answers to everything.

This regrettable condition acts to preclude their unbiased consideration of phenomena on the cutting edge of science, which is not how a true scientist should behave. In fact, many "Skeptics" will not even read significantly into the literature on the subjects about which they are most skeptical. I have direct experience with this specific behavior on the part of a number of PhACT members. Initially, I attributed that behavior to just plain laziness, but lately I've begun to suspect that those individuals may actually have a phobia about reading material that is contrary to their own views. It seems entirely possible that they fear "contamination" from that exposure will eventually lead to (Gasp!) acceptance of the opposition's position. Such scientifically inclined, but psychologically scarred people tend to join Skeptics' organizations much as one might join any other support group, say, Alcoholics Anonymous. There they find comfort, consolation, and support amongst their own kind.

Anyone who has spent much time engaging members of Skeptics' organizations knows about their strong inclination toward ridicule and ad hominem criticism of those with differing viewpoints. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that many members of PhACT have been rather offended by my position as someone who is skeptical of Skeptics. As the old adage states, "They can dish it out, but they can't take it."

In school, you are taught that "critical thinking" means to refute and ridicule anything that opposes the establishment or status quo, but never the status quo itself. A true skeptic can rise above that and apply skepticism and critical thought toward established orthodoxy, but a pseudo-skeptic cannot. Instead, the pseudo-skeptic follows the school system's form of "critical thinking", applying it only to those who oppose orthodoxy in defense of the status quo.

In that sense, they are in reality "establishment defenders" rather than true skeptics. That is why they NEVER challenge, criticize or scrutinize their government or any part of the establishment, including the pharmaceutical companies, CIA or FBI, even if logic, facts, evidence or moral cause dictates that they should.

To these establishment defenders, authority = truth, and as such is always blameless in their eyes. That is their religion, so hence, all their skills, talents and knowledge are used to serve their true God - orthodoxy. In their view, establishment authority can do no wrong, even if they murder, traffic drugs, steal, lie, stage terrorist attacks, start wars by funding both sides, etc.

What this means is that these pseudo-skeptics or establishment defenders do not serve truth as their master. As such, they are willing to lie and deceive to serve their masters (there are so many documented cases of this). Thus they are not "free" in any sense of the word, nor honest, which is sad.

This is why not only are they closed minded against anything to do with paranormal phenomena, but are vehemently opposed to all claims of government conspiracies as well, no matter how well supported, for it offends their "true master" (which is not truth).

Examples of famous pseudoskeptics and establishment defenders: (Check them all out and you will see that their actions fit the above description)

James Randi and his JREF crowd

Michael Shermer

CSICOP and their crowd

Penn and Teller and their "Bullshit" show (pun intended) which is an insult to one's intelligence

The Mythbusters

Phil Plait and his "Bad Astronomy" folks

Scientism – The Religion of Pseudoskeptics?

Now let me clarify something. Critics of pseudoskeptics have accused them of believing

in Scientism – the belief that science is to be treated as an authority with all the answers and taken on faith, just like a religion is. In response, pseudoskeptics claim that science is a process of independent peer review and replication and therefore not a religion.

So then, is science a religion, you might ask? Well, yes and no. Technically, science is not a religion. It is a tool and methodology of obtaining logical conclusions through evidence and inquiry. As such, it is not an entity that holds positions or viewpoints, like people do. Therefore, science is not pro or anti-paranormal, anymore than a pencil, computer program or mathematical formula is.

However, the scientific establishment is another matter, because it involves people, politics, power, money, institutions and vested interests. And as such, politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression are naturally a part of it. Realists know and understand this. But for some reason pseudoskeptics don't.

The key fallacy that pseudoskeptics make is lumping the scientific process and the scientific establishment into one, and assuming that they are one and the same. That is the major fallacy of the organized skepticism movement, which consists of the JREF, CSICOP and Michael Shermer type crowd.

In doing so, they falsely assume that the science and medical establishment is objective and unbiased, and free of politics, corruption, control, censorship and suppression. That's where their major mistake is. And as such, they deem the science and medical establishment as an unassailable authority that is not to be questioned or challenged. In that sense, they treat science as a religion. So even though they claim that science is not a religion, they still treat it as such, by holding the views of the science establishment as an unquestionable authority.

So, if researchers such as Dean Radin, Rupert Sheldrake or Dr. Gary Schwartz come up with evidence for psychic phenomena, it is automatically dismissed as invalid, simply because it challenges the orthodoxy of the science establishment, not because the experiments were not legit. And they will use any excuse to do so, including the lamest ones.

Likewise, when evidence comes up that vaccines, fluoride, aspartame or mercury dental fillings are dangerous and harmful, that evidence is suppressed and deemed inadmissible, simply because it threatens the medical establishment and its vested interests, not because the evidence is untrue.

By filtering out such contrary evidence, even when it is legit and valid, pseudoskeptics definitely are treating the science and medical establishment as a religion. And as we all know, religion is authority and faith based, not evidence based.

You see, no one likes to invest a lot of time and money into something, only to have it proven wrong or changed. And the science/medical establishment is no exception. They are people with political interests, not objective unbiased machines. So let's get real here.

You don't have to be educated to understand this. Anyone with common sense, street smarts, and real life experience knows this. But pseudoskeptics, in their fanaticism, ignore such common sense realities. They are fanatics, not realists.

Furthermore, organized skeptics like to tout "science" as a peer reviewed process of independent replication, and therefore totally reliable. In doing so, they treat it like a "democratic process" in which the majority of scientists decide what's true by agreeing on it. This is another fallacy, because it assumes that most scientists are objective and unbiased, and free to say whatever they want without consequence.

But this is not the way the real world of money, power and politics works. Any realist knows that when you work for an institution or receive funding, you have to "tow the party line", or else you are out. It's that simple. Any scientist who says something that opposes the views of those he works for, will jeopardize his career and reputation. There are many real life examples of scientists and researchers who have lost funding or suffered damage to their career for espousing unorthodox positions, even if their position was legit and evidence-based.

Moreover, most people are not unbiased, open minded, or hold truth as the highest value. Instead, they are concerned with their image, reputation, career, funding, and

hold rigid views that they feel safe and comfortable in. Many people do not like uncertainty or mystery. They want a world where things make sense and are predictable and well-defined. That's why they are prone to fall into rigid unchanging belief systems. Why would scientists be any different. They may be more educated than the average person, sure, but they are humans, and humans have biases.

It is the truth seeker and freethinker who questions everything and does not hold any authority as truth, who is most likely to find the truth. Not the most educated or well connected with institutions.

Pseudoskeptics ignore all this, or are blind to it, because they are fanatics, not truth seekers or freethinkers. When you look at the overall picture, this becomes obvious.

Thus, the key difference in this area between the pseudoskeptic and the truth seeker/freethinker, is that the former holds the science/medical establishment as a religion of unquestionable authority, whereas the latter does not, and recognizes it for what it is – an institution with vested interests, politics, power, money, control and censorship that is not above suppressing that which threatens it.

Anyone who examines the material produced by pseudoskeptics can see this apparent pattern. They hold everything said by the science/medical establishment as unassailable truth and authority, and never question or scrutinize it, ever, while automatically dismissing anything that opposes it. That's not skepticism. It's thought control, mind control, and suppression of truth.

Now, let me clarify something. It is NOT my position to argue that all paranormal claims are true. In fact, I happen to be skeptical of many claims myself. Instead, I am for open minded inquiry and honestly weighing the evidence. Not all paranormal claims are true, but some are backed by a lot more evidence than others. For example, ESP and ghosts are backed by a much higher percentage of testimonials than the Loch Ness Monster is. So, I argue that the evidence for paranormal phenomena should be considered and investigated as possibilities rather than rejected automatically ruled out just because it doesn't fit in with prevailing beliefs and world views. I do not claim to have all the answers to all the paranormal mysteries. However, based on my experience and research, I will argue that the overwhelming evidence as a whole points to the existence of some sort of metaphysical reality that exists, and that at least some

paranormal claims have a basis in reality. My position is that SOME types of paranormal phenomena which are backed by evidence and widespread testimonials (e.g. ESP, Psi, Telepathy, NDE's) have something to them other than mere hallucination or delusion.

Very few people are willing to cast their skepticism on all sides, including their own beliefs. Most people, including the pseudoskeptics, seek to validate what they already believe, and reject the data that would cause them to change their beliefs. We at SCEPCOP try to avoid this by applying true skepticism to all sides, including our own, and basing our conclusions on the data itself rather than on our subjective emotional beliefs.

With that, let's begin the debunking of their common arguments.

Note: I have assigned numbers to each pseudoskeptical argument so that I can reference them throughout this book.

Note: Although CSICOP has changed its name to CSI, I will refer to it as CSICOP here because that is still what most people know it as.

"I shall not commit the fashionable stupidity of regarding everything I cannot explain as a fraud."

- Carl Gustav Jung

"It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware."

– Albert Einstein

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes.”

- Marcel Proust, French novelist

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[Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers](#)

Section I: General Arguments Against Paranormal Claims

Argument # 1: It is irrational to believe anything that hasn't been proven.

This is the main philosophy behind most skeptical arguments. As Dr. Melvin Morse, Seattle pediatrician and author specializing in child Near Death Experiences said:

“The notion that 'It is rational to only believe what's been proven' somehow got twisted into 'It is irrational to believe in anything that hasn't been proven'.” (Interview from video: Conversations with God)

By "proven" skeptics mean proven according to the scientific method, which they consider to be the only reliable method. There are several problems with this argument:

1) First of all, just because something hasn't been proven and established in mainstream science doesn't mean it doesn't exist or isn't true. If it did, then nothing would exist until proven or discovered. Bacteria and germs would never have caused illnesses until they were proven and discovered, smoking would not cause cancer until it was proven, the planet Pluto would not have existed until it was discovered, etc. Anyone knows that this simply is not so. For instance, when Acupuncture was first introduced in the West, skeptics and certain scientists claimed that it had no basis and only worked due to the placebo effect because they couldn't understand how it worked. This reflected the typical false thinking of skeptics that anything they don't understand must be due to superstition or chance. However, practitioners and believers knew otherwise and were later validated by extensive studies have been done to show that it indeed does work for treating various ailments and getting results which placebos can't account for. An extensive listing of these research studies can be found on the Med lab website. In fact, the AMA (American Medical Association) has already declared that Acupuncture works and is an effective treatment, proving the skeptics wrong. The point is that Acupuncture worked before it was proven to work, not after. Skeptics assume that everything that exists must be able to be analyzed in a lab. That's just not how reality works.

2) Second, just because something hasn't been proven to established science doesn't mean that it hasn't been proved firsthand to certain people. Established views are not the dictum of all reality. Many types of paranormal phenomena have been proved firsthand to eyewitnesses and experiencers. For example, even though the cases of NDE's don't prove the existence of an afterlife (at least not yet), those who have experienced them claim that the experience of the separation of body and spirit is firsthand proof to them of an afterlife, just as riding in a car is firsthand proof that cars exist, and they fear death no more. Those who have OBE's (Out of Body Experiences) also make similar claims, and they need no proof nor do they need to convince anyone. These claims are further supported by the fact that in many documented cases the subject could hear conversations or see things in other rooms and other places, which are later confirmed and verified to be remarkably accurate. Who's to say that they're wrong just because we haven't had the same experiences? That would be equivalent to saying that because I've never been to Japan, everyone else who claims to have been there is mistaken or deluded. The same goes for eyewitnesses of ghosts, UFO's (Unidentified Flying Objects), alien abductions, Bigfoot, etc. These sightings and encounters range from the obscure and distant to ones that are crystal clear and at point-blank-range, making them much harder to dismiss.

3) Third, many research experiments and studies conducted under the scientific method HAVE passed with positive results. For example, experiments in micro-psychokinesis done by Dr. Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunn at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research labs (PEAR)> using random generator machines to measure subjects' PK influence on them, obtained positive consistent results for over 20 years. These were done under proper controls and scientific procedures, even according to prominent skeptic Ray Hyman, who investigated the Prince experiments in person and conceded that he could find no flaws in the methodology. The small but consistent results achieved by PEAR over 20 years are calculated by chance alone to be 1 in 1035. Likewise, the Ganzfeld experiments in telepathy done in the early 70's also had repeated success, with receivers in 42 controlled experiments scoring an average of 38 to 45 percent compared to the chance rate of 25 percent. (See Argument # 17) The odds of that occurring by chance are less than one in a billion. More recently, controlled experiments involving four prominent mediums accuracy were done by Dr. Gary Schwartz of the Human Energy Lab of the University of Arizona. (See Argument # 16) These mediums achieved a hit rate 70 to 90 percent, even when in one experiment they were NOT allowed to ask any questions of the sitters or see them! Skeptics repeatedly continue to ignore this fact! (See the Jan 2001 edition of the Journal for the Society of Psychical Research) A list of studies that produced psi results can be found in Dean Radin's book The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena. Many researchers will tell you that these studies prove that telepathy and micro-psychokinesis exist at least on the micro level. The skeptics, of course will say that those tests yielded impossible results and therefore were not done under properly controlled conditions, or else the researchers' overzealous desire

to get psi results botched the results. But this of course reflects their bias and a priori dismissal of facts that don't fit in with their beliefs. It is not logical to deny the facts that don't support your beliefs, it is more logical to update your beliefs to account for the facts. Nevertheless, new scientific discoveries tend to pass through stages first before being accepted (see last paragraph of Argument # 8)

4) Fourth, just because something is irrational to skeptics doesn't mean that it is irrational to others who know or believe that it is real. Skeptics and scientific materialists do not have the monopoly on rational thinking. Lots of rational intelligent intellectual people believe in God, spiritual dimensions, or that there is more to reality than the material world. The skeptics' system of rational thinking is not the dictatum by which all things that exist must conform to. This can easily be demonstrated by all the things that skeptics have been wrong about before, such as flight, laws of physics, quantum mechanics, giant squid, etc. proving their fallibility.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 2: Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

This is one of the core mantras of hard nosed skeptics, and is usually presented like this:

“If my friend told me that on the way here he was delayed because his car got a flat tire, then I would believe it because it is an ordinary claim. However, if he claimed that on his way here he was temporarily abducted by aliens in a UFO, then I would not believe his claim because it is extraordinary in nature. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”

Now it would help if the skeptics who proclaim this argument specify what they would accept as extraordinary evidence. Otherwise, arbitrarily stating this argument gives one an out no matter what evidence is shown, and a way to move the goal posts endlessly. While it is reasonable to expect a higher standard of evidence for more extraordinary claims, there are nevertheless 7 problems with it to keep in mind.

1) First of all, this argument gives skeptics a shady and underhanded way to move the goal posts any way they like. By not defining the standards for “extraordinary”, they are free to move the goalposts up further anytime their standards have been met on pure semantics, which they have often done.

Definitions of what are “extraordinary claims” vary based on prior beliefs and experiences. Not everyone agrees on whether a claim is extraordinary or ordinary. Suppose we were fishes for example, and lived underwater our whole lives without ever seeing or hearing about land. The claim of land existing above water would be an extraordinary claim to us, though not to the creatures living on the land above. Now obviously just because the claim of land is extraordinary to us as fishes does not mean that the land doesn’t exist.

The point is that extraordinary claims are not extraordinary to everyone. What is extraordinary to some is ordinary and natural to others depending on their experience and level of consciousness. For example, the internal body energy of chi gong (or quigong) is a mystical force to Westerners but has been a natural everyday part of life for thousands of years in China. There, chi is used, felt, and observed by its practitioners much the same as the effects of gravity are felt and observed by us. Likewise, having Astral Projections and Out of Body Experiences are extraordinary to those who have never experienced them, but for those who have them regularly, they are an ordinary part of life. In the same way, our cars, radios and cell phones are extraordinary to tribal natives in remote parts of Africa, but ordinary to us.

The best solution, in my opinion, is for everybody to put their cards on the table by honestly specifying their prior beliefs. This sets the standards for what is to be expected and leads to a better mutual understanding of each other.

3) Third, although this rule is good as a general guideline, the fact that 3 possible alternatives exist make this rule fallible.

a) It is possible for something to exist without leaving behind collectable evidence as a souvenir to us. For example, planes, radio waves, electromagnetism, and light move around without leaving "hard evidence" yet they exist. Therefore, extraordinary phenomena can exist without leaving behind extraordinary evidence.

b) It is possible for something to exist yet the evidence for it hasn't been found or understood yet, which is the case for almost every discovery in history from fire and wheels to gunpowder and gravity, to planets, atoms and electromagnetism.

c) It is possible that the evidence is already there but that it's subject to interpretation, making it controversial. This is true for instance, of the alleged mysterious implants found by doctors and surgeons in alleged alien abductees. So even when something leaves a trail, residue or mark, they are subject to interpretation anyway.

Of course, some skeptics have argued that all these things are possible but not probable, hence the requirement for extraordinary evidence. However, in order to really know all that is probable and improbable in the universe and reality, it would

require that one have complete knowledge of every dimension and reality that exists in the universe and beyond. No one, neither skeptic nor believer, has that kind of knowledge. Therefore, it would be more accurate to state that:

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence to convince skeptics, but not necessarily to exist in objective reality."

4) Fourth, the argument is based on an unproven premise. It is based on the premise that paranormal phenomena are either impossible or extremely improbable. The reason it reflects this premise is obvious. Someone who believes that paranormal events are impossible is obviously going to need a lot more proof than someone who believes that they are possible and normal. However, just because miracles, ESP, sightings of apparitions, or OBE's haven't happened to skeptics doesn't mean they haven't happened to others. Likewise, just because I haven't been to Spain doesn't mean that everyone who has is mistaken or deluded.

In order for one to know what is impossible or improbable, one would have to be an all knowing creator of the universe who possesses every knowledge that there is. But none of these hard nosed skeptics are anywhere near that level, so their assumption that paranormal events are impossible in my view is baseless. As scientist and author Arthur C. Clarke states in his first law:

"When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong."

5) Fifth, the argument favors conservatism or retaining the established theory in spite of contrary evidence. This has its pros and cons. Obviously, it makes sense to retain what works until something better comes along. However, when it comes to modifying our paradigms or world view we also tend to resist change, even when the data calls for it. This argument I fear, is used as an excuse for those who resist change. But if we never abandoned theories or expanded them, then science would not make progress. History has shown that progress comes with new discoveries and abandoning old outdated theories that no longer fit the new data acquired.

This skeptical rule does not specify a sufficient condition for sufficient evidence. Therefore, rules should be established to clarify whether a competing theory is promising enough to warrant further research so that when those rules are satisfied, excuses can't be used to try to dismiss the evidence off hand. Otherwise, as Ron Pearson says in his article Theoretical Physics Back Survival:

<http://www.cfpf.org.uk/articles/rdp/theoretical/theoreticalphysics.html>

"Science, however, cannot progress by theory alone; it requires a synthesis of theory and experiment. When observation runs ahead of theory to provide anomalies which seem inexplicable, then as history has shown by repeating itself over and over, the anomalies are avoided, ignored or discredited in order to maintain the status quo: to avoid the need to injure existing intellectual vested interests."

6) Sixth, as my friend Michael Goodspeed pointed out in one of his articles, science has not historically gone by this rule:

<http://www.rense.com/general51/embr.htm>

"Even hopelessly flawed arguments posited by the pseudoskeptic can have the power to flummox his opponents. In heated debates, he need not speak Truth to emerge "victorious." Games of semantics, creative ad hominem, and the deliberate misstatement of his opponents' positions are quite effective and oft-used tactics in his intellectual battles. The potential violence of King's English is brought to its greatest fruition by the pseudoskeptic. With his back against the ropes, he will daze his opponent with a well-placed quote from Carl Sagan ("Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence!"), send him reeling with the words "You can't prove a negative!", then slash his throat with Occam's Razor ("The simplest explanation is also the most likely!").

These ordinarily sound scientific platitudes are used as the ultimate "get out of jail free" cards for pseudoskeptics who have no answers to inconvenient questions. Let's examine Sagan's assertion that "extrarordinary" claims require "extraordinary" evidence.

The problem with this statement is that popular science does not require extraordinary evidence for its extraordinary claims. Big Bang theory may be the most extraordinary claim in the history of popular science. Here we have an idea that can be neatly encapsulated in eight words: "At first, there was nothing...then it exploded." (Source: <http://w3trid.com/~wboggs/comics.html>) But how can NOTHING explode? Big Bang theory "defies gravity" and violates innumerable laws of physics, it remains a HYPOTHETICAL mathematical model, yet it is promoted as truth by NASA and institutions of higher learning around the world. Why has the mainstream never demanded the same standards of Big Bang theorists that it does of "paranormal" proponents?

Where are the "double-blind tests" validating Big Bang theory? Has Big Bang theory been tested by JREF or other skeptical organizations?

What about Einstein's theory of relativity? The general public seems unaware that it has always been and is still a matter of contention among accredited scientists. As Marcus Coleman writes (From <http://www.wbabin.net/physics/marcus.htm>):

"Einstein's relativity was not accepted by a number of his contemporaries. Rutherford, widely thought of as the 'father of nuclear physics', considered it to be nonsense. Columbia University astronomer C.L. Poor in 1922,'26 & '30 gave unassailable refutations of the claims of Eddington, i.e., that observations of the 1919 South American solar eclipse confirmed Einstein's predicted gravitational attraction of light. (Poor also documents a similar situation existing with the 1922 West Australian eclipse and the claims of Campbell & Trumpler.) It was this 'proof' espoused by Eddington however, which brought Einstein his first acclaim and greatest fame.

"Poor showed clearly that the actual observations were not what was claimed and that they did not support Einstein's prediction. This is still a valid refutation of Einstein's presumed gravitational attraction of light, and notwithstanding the 'Gravitational Lensing' phenomenon, still remains standing as an unanswered challenge to Einstein's general theory of relativity and theory of gravitation. As a side issue, this relegates the concept of 'black holes' to pure science fiction as many non-conventional scientists contend - that is, despite evidence of the most recent discoveries being claimed as proof of their existence (even to including the latest data concerning the centre of the Milky Way), such 'proof' does not survive close scrutiny."

My point here is not to argue one side or another in debates over specific cosmological questions, but rather to demonstrate that these most sacred "truths" of popular science are in reality EXTRAORDINARY CLAIMS which have never required EXTRAORDINARY EVIDENCE.

A more accurate phrase to describe the standards of pseudoskeptics (and, I'm sorry to say, much of the mainstream) is, "UNPOPULAR claims require extraordinary evidence." In its time, Galileo's thesis was considered quite extraordinary, as was Newton's. Why should this have been held against them? What is wrong with judging the evidence of a claim on its MERIT, while ignoring all pre-conceived notions of what is possible and impossible?"

For more on this argument, see Wikisynergy's entry on it [here](#).

Extraordinary evidence for 4 phenomenon

7) Seventh, from a certain standard, it could be said that we already have some extraordinary evidence for certain types of paranormal claims. Take the following 4 types of phenomena for instance.

UFO's (Unidentified Flying Objects): It can be said that there is extraordinary evidence to support the existence of UFO's from unexplainable photographs, video camera footage, multiple eyewitness sightings, abduction reports, Air Force radar reports, etc. All of these constitute convincing evidence for some people, but not for others.

Although much of it can be explained as misperceptions, natural phenomena, weather balloons, aircraft, birds, balls of lightning, luminous Earth lights, etc. there are still many cases which are unexplainable and display features not known of any natural phenomena.

One example is the White House Merry Go Round Incident of July 1952 where Air

Force fighters repeatedly chased UFO's that kept appearing on Air Force radar was never adequately explained. Even skeptics admit that some cases are unexplainable, though they claim that "unexplainable does not mean inexplicable". (See Argument # 11) Another is the famous Bentwaters UFO Incident that occurred on an American military base in England in 1980 involving two dozen military witnesses, including Colonel Halt, of an up-close UFO sighting, which remains an undebunked and compelling case.

After years of extensive investigations and interviews with Alien Abductees by Budd Hopkins and John Mack, who wrote books on the phenomenon, they concluded that there was more to the abduction experience than mere hallucination or sleep paralysis.

Since it's not always possible for extraordinary things to leave behind some type of tangible evidence, if I saw a UFO at close range and didn't have my camera with me and then it flew away, how am I expected to have extraordinary evidence? Am I supposed to be able to call that UFO back as if it were under my command or chase it like Superman? The fact that this event happened without our control makes us unable to satisfy this criteria. The same goes with ghosts and other things.

For hard nosed skeptics though, even good evidence will not be enough, since their mentality is to debunk rather than to discover and learn. You see, even if I had a piece of a crashed flying saucer and showed it to them, they would just say that it is probably just a piece of top secret military aircraft that we don't know about yet. They would want the full saucer itself to be convinced. Then if I found a whole saucer and showed it to them, that would still not be enough because then they could say that there is no proof that the saucer is extraterrestrial in origin and that it could just be a secret type of aircraft invented by the military. Of course, if they had real alien bodies in front of them, then it'd be much harder to dismiss, but you get the idea here. They will continually raise the bar. It's their mentality that causes them to close their minds and ignore everything that doesn't fit into their viewpoint.

Nevertheless, many brilliant researchers have concluded that UFO's, whatever they are, are definitely real. Author and nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman who has spent years in this field has written a series of articles on this, which you can find at: http://www.v-j-enterprises.com/sf_Articles.html He has also published some well researched and convincing books such as *Crash at Corona: The U.S. Military Retrieval and Cover-Up of a Ufo* and *TOP SECRET/MAJIC*. (Incidentally, Friedman has issued a public challenge to the US Air Force to publicly debate the UFO phenomena, which

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In addition, public coalitions such as The Disclosure Project have brought forth hundreds of high ranking government, military and intelligence officials and insiders who have confessed to knowledge of government involvement with UFO's and ET technology, and the cover ups and secrecy surrounding them. See videos of their testimonies at press conferences here:

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Although these claims are largely anecdotal, we must understand that while anecdotal evidence is not completely reliable, it is not completely unreliable either and is considered to be evidence in societal functions depending on various factors. (See Argument # 5 regarding the validity of anecdotal evidence) In addition, the amount of anecdotal evidence is also relevant because the higher the number and the more credible the witnesses, the stronger the evidence.

However, die hard skeptics will not consider anecdotal evidence to be valid evidence regardless of the amount. To them, credible evidence has to be measurable in some conventional way and reproduced at our beck and call. The problem with this is that what we can measure is limited to our level of technology. For instance, before we had the technology to measure seismic-activity in the Earth's crust, they still existed even though they couldn't yet be measured.

Furthermore, since we can't see radio waves, electromagnetism, air, gravity, magnetic force, etc. but they exist anyway, it is logical to assume that there are other things that could exist but aren't yet measurable. Our technology may not be up to the level to measure other things that could be there. Or it may be that our technology can only detect things of the physical plane and not the spiritual plane. Looking for physical evidence of something spiritual is like looking for evidence in the ocean for the existence of Mars rather than looking for it in space.

ESP (Extra Sensory Perception) and Telepathy: This is also especially true for ESP and telepathy. Since the 1930's, starting with JB Rhine, experiments under controlled conditions have been done that revealed consistent well above chance results, which strongly point to the conclusion that ESP and telepathy exist at least to a small degree. These experiments, particularly the Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld Experiments done from 1974 to 1997, were repeatable too, with 2,549 sessions showing above average results. (See Argument # 17) And PEAR has produced above chance results in telekinesis for nearly three decades. (See Dean Radin's website which outlines these)

The problem is that not all scientists and researchers are able to produce the same results. Skeptics usually point to the failures of psi experiments and ignore the successes. They will accept the failed psi experiments as evidence against psi, but not the successful psi experiments as evidence for psi. This is an obvious double standard, which is typical of closed-minded skeptics. They will continually raise the bar on evidence until you can't satisfy it, even demanding a 100 percent success rate! (Nothing is 100 percent, but even if you could get a 100 percent success rate, they would move the goal posts and charged fraud)

Of course, not all skeptics are that closed-minded, but this gives you an idea of the mentality of closed-minded skeptics. I'm not saying that we should only pay attention to the successes and ignore the failures either, but that we should take them both into account, and when we do so, there is in fact strong consistent evidence that psi exists, both from scientific experiments and overwhelming anecdotal evidence (as studies show most of the world has experienced ESP). It is possible of course, that some scientists skew the psi results because they are eager to find evidence for psi, but why do skeptics automatically assume that it must be that? Obviously it's because of their preconceived beliefs (which they will not admit). If ESP and telepathy exist, it doesn't mean that it has to be controllable at our beck and call like some raw energy. We've only begun to scratch the outskirts on the nature of the whole thing anyway.

Besides experiments, countless accounts of psychic experiences abound, both documented and undocumented. In fact, studies show that about 2/3 of Americans claim to have had psychic experiences, making them quite common rather than "extraordinary". For instance:

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"In their biennial report on the state of science understanding released in April 2002, the National Science Foundation found that 60 percent of adults in the United States agreed or strongly agreed that some people possess psychic powers or extrasensory perception (ESP). In June 2002, the Consumer Analysis Group conducted the most extensive survey ever done in the United Kingdom and revealed that 67 percent of adults believed in psychic powers. Report author Jan Walsh, commenting on the statistics that found that two out of three surveyed believed in an afterlife, said that as far as the British public was concerned, "the supernatural world isn't so paranormal after all."

The most common type of psychic experience is telepathy, such as when loved ones and close friends from vast distances apart know at the exact time when something traumatic happened to the other. Sometimes, every detail of the traumatic event is observed or felt from afar. They are extremely powerful personal proof. I've had a few of these kind myself. Often, what was suddenly felt out of nowhere about what happened to the loved one is later verified to be true, occurring at exactly the time it was dreamt or felt. This suggests some subconscious telepathic link between people who are close. Experiences of this kind are in fact very common.

Skeptics of course say that these kind of things are nothing but pure coincidence, but this is unsubstantiated and a rush to judgment. They just don't realize that just because something happens that they can't understand doesn't mean that it MUST be coincidence or chance. In the same manner, if someone spoke Spanish and I didn't, that doesn't mean that the person speaking Spanish is speaking random gibberish. If someone living in a tribe in Africa saw me turning channels with my remote and didn't understand how remote controls work, that doesn't mean that my pushing buttons on the remote and the channels changing are just a coincidence!

Mystical Experiences: And what about mystical experiences, spiritual enlightenment, being "born again", Near Death Experiences and Out of Body Experiences? These can also be said by those who experience them to be extraordinary evidence as well,

because they are often self-authenticating and life changing in themselves. As the 1994 New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia states under Mysticism:

“Mysticism in general refers to a direct and immediate experience of the sacred, or the knowledge derived from such an experience... First, the experience is immediate and overwhelming, divorced from the common experience of reality. Second, the experience or the knowledge imparted by it is felt to be self-authenticating, without need of further evidence or justification. Finally, it is held to be ineffable, its essence incapable of being expressed or understood outside the experience itself... the experience itself is always of an Absolute that transcends the human efforts or methods of achieving it. (New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia 1994)”

Experiencers will describe these experiences not as faith-based, but an “inner knowing.” The fact that these type of experiences are dramatically life changing makes them “extraordinary evidence” themselves simply because ordinary experiences don't alter people's lives in this way. To say that these self-authenticating, life changing experiences are just pure imagination is closed-minded to say the least. As Faith, a practitioner of Shakti Gaivism and one who has had all-pervasive cosmic transcendental experiences of God in Unity state, constantly reminds us on my email group:

“But remember .. there is "Belief" a chosen activity of mind... and there is an actual Knowing... via direct experience. They are 2 differnt things. I never could accept chosen Belief.. THAT is why I was an Agnostic.

I like the example of the person working in an inner office with no windows. A co-worker could come in and tell them it is raining out. IF they accept That as truth... it is ONLY a chosen belief. But.. If they were to go outside themselves and stand in the driving rain and get soaking wet... then that is no longer a chosen belief... that would qualify as an actual Knowing.. by Direct experience.

Your Mind is Limited... but "YOU" are far greater than your mind... you are ALL that is..... you just cannot see it yet. Mind keeps you contracted.... but You can go beyond individual mind and tap the All Knowing. The only way you can KNOW this... is by experiencing it. I am not talking about "Belief" here... but direct experience. IF you were to accept what I say here.... THAT would be a Belief.... No Good in my book or yours either I am sure. So... I will NOT be disappointed if you do not ACCEPT what I say.... on the other hand..... You cannot really know that what I say is really illogical babble either..... I think the fairest thing to do is... stay open to the possibilities.... That

there are things beyond the scope of Science, things that your current logic based mind has not been exposed to.... but that are none the less Possible.” - Faith

“Extraordinary evidence” is subject to perspective because those who have firsthand direct experience of the phenomena already have their “extraordinary evidence” while others who haven’t, don’t. (See Argument # 5 regarding anecdotal evidence) For instance, those who have had full blown OBE’s already have a realization and knowing that separation of body and spirit can and has taken place, and that there is life after death, especially if they are able to witness specific details at a distance which are later verified as accurate. For them the experience is as apparent as it would be apparent to you whether you were in your own car or house. Similarly, those with transcendent mystical experiences describe it as an “inner knowing” that transcends all description and removes all doubt. In the same fashion, those who have seen Bigfoot or ghosts firsthand at close point-blank-range also have their “extraordinary evidence.”

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 2: Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

This is one of the core mantras of hard nosed skeptics, and is usually presented like this:

“If my friend told me that on the way here he was delayed because his car got a flat tire, then I would believe it because it is an ordinary claim. However, if he claimed that on his way here he was temporarily abducted by aliens in a UFO, then I would not believe his claim because it is extraordinary in nature. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”

Now it would help if the skeptics who proclaim this argument specify what they would accept as extraordinary evidence. Otherwise, arbitrarily stating this argument gives one an out no matter what evidence is shown, and a way to move the goal posts endlessly. While it is reasonable to expect a higher standard of evidence for more extraordinary claims, there are nevertheless 7 problems with it to keep in mind.

1) First of all, this argument gives skeptics a shady and underhanded way to move the goal posts any way they like. By not defining the standards for “extraordinary”, they are free to move the goalposts up further anytime their standards have been met on pure semantics, which they have often done.

Definitions of what are “extraordinary claims” vary based on prior beliefs and experiences. Not everyone agrees on whether a claim is extraordinary or ordinary. Suppose we were fishes for example, and lived underwater our whole lives without ever seeing or hearing about land. The claim of land existing above water would be an extraordinary claim to us, though not to the creatures living on the land above. Now

obviously just because the claim of land is extraordinary to us as fishes does not mean that the land doesn't exist.

The point is that extraordinary claims are not extraordinary to everyone. What is extraordinary to some is ordinary and natural to others depending on their experience and level of consciousness. For example, the internal body energy of chi gong (or quigong) is a mystical force to Westerners but has been a natural everyday part of life for thousands of years in China. There, chi is used, felt, and observed by its practitioners much the same as the effects of gravity are felt and observed by us. Likewise, having Astral Projections and Out of Body Experiences are extraordinary to those who have never experienced them, but for those who have them regularly, they are an ordinary part of life. In the same way, our cars, radios and cell phones are extraordinary to tribal natives in remote parts of Africa, but ordinary to us.

The best solution, in my opinion, is for everybody to put their cards on the table by honestly specifying their prior beliefs. This sets the standards for what is to be expected and leads to a better mutual understanding of each other.

3) Third, although this rule is good as a general guideline, the fact that 3 possible alternatives exist make this rule fallible.

a) It is possible for something to exist without leaving behind collectable evidence as a souvenir to us. For example, planes, radio waves, electromagnetism, and light move around without leaving "hard evidence" yet they exist. Therefore, extraordinary phenomena can exist without leaving behind extraordinary evidence.

b) It is possible for something to exist yet the evidence for it hasn't been found or understood yet, which is the case for almost every discovery in history from fire and wheels to gunpowder and gravity, to planets, atoms and electromagnetism.

c) It is possible that the evidence is already there but that it's subject to interpretation, making it controversial. This is true for instance, of the alleged mysterious implants found by doctors and surgeons in alleged alien abductees. So even when something leaves a trail, residue or mark, they are subject to interpretation anyway.

Of course, some skeptics have argued that all these things are possible but not

probable, hence the requirement for extraordinary evidence. However, in order to really know all that is probable and improbable in the universe and reality, it would require that one have complete knowledge of every dimension and reality that exists in the universe and beyond. No one, neither skeptic nor believer, has that kind of knowledge. Therefore, it would be more accurate to state that:

"Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence to convince skeptics, but not necessarily to exist in objective reality."

4) Fourth, the argument is based on an unproven premise. It is based on the premise that paranormal phenomena are either impossible or extremely improbable. The reason it reflects this premise is obvious. Someone who believes that paranormal events are impossible is obviously going to need a lot more proof than someone who believes that they are possible and normal. However, just because miracles, ESP, sightings of apparitions, or OBE's haven't happened to skeptics doesn't mean they haven't happened to others. Likewise, just because I haven't been to Spain doesn't mean that everyone who has is mistaken or deluded.

In order for one to know what is impossible or improbable, one would have to be an all knowing creator of the universe who possesses every knowledge that there is. But none of these hard nosed skeptics are anywhere near that level, so their assumption that paranormal events are impossible in my view is baseless. As scientist and author Arthur C. Clarke states in his first law:

"When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong."

5) Fifth, the argument favors conservatism or retaining the established theory in spite of contrary evidence. This has its pros and cons. Obviously, it makes sense to retain what works until something better comes along. However, when it comes to modifying our paradigms or world view we also tend to resist change, even when the data calls for it. This argument I fear, is used as an excuse for those who resist change. But if we never abandoned theories or expanded them, then science would not make progress. History has shown that progress comes with new discoveries and abandoning old outdated theories that no longer fit the new data acquired.

This skeptical rule does not specify a sufficient condition for sufficient evidence. Therefore, rules should be established to clarify whether a competing theory is promising enough to warrant further research so that when those rules are satisfied, excuses can't be used to try to dismiss the evidence off hand. Otherwise, as Ron Pearson says in his article Theoretical Physics Back Survival:

<http://www.cfpf.org.uk/articles/rdp/theoretical/theoreticalphysics.html>

"Science, however, cannot progress by theory alone; it requires a synthesis of theory and experiment. When observation runs ahead of theory to provide anomalies which seem inexplicable, then as history has shown by repeating itself over and over, the anomalies are avoided, ignored or discredited in order to maintain the status quo: to avoid the need to injure existing intellectual vested interests."

6) Sixth, as my friend Michael Goodspeed pointed out in one of his articles, science has not historically gone by this rule:

<http://www.rense.com/general51/embr.htm>

"Even hopelessly flawed arguments posited by the pseudoskeptic can have the power to flummox his opponents. In heated debates, he need not speak Truth to emerge "victorious." Games of semantics, creative ad hominem, and the deliberate misstatement of his opponents' positions are quite effective and oft-used tactics in his intellectual battles. The potential violence of King's English is brought to its greatest fruition by the pseudoskeptic. With his back against the ropes, he will daze his opponent with a well-placed quote from Carl Sagan ("Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence!"), send him reeling with the words "You can't prove a negative!", then slash his throat with Occam's Razor ("The simplest explanation is also the most likely!").

These ordinarily sound scientific platitudes are used as the ultimate "get out of jail free"

cards for pseudoskeptics who have no answers to inconvenient questions. Let's examine Sagan's assertion that "extrarordinary" claims require "extraordinary" evidence. The problem with this statement is that popular science does not require extraordinary evidence for its extraordinary claims. Big Bang theory may be the most extraordinary claim in the history of popular science. Here we have an idea that can be neatly encapsulated in eight words: "At first, there was nothing...then it exploded." (Source: <http://w3trid.com/~wboggs/comics.html>) But how can NOTHING explode? Big Bang theory "defies gravity" and violates innumerable laws of physics, it remains a HYPOTHETICAL mathematical model, yet it is promoted as truth by NASA and institutions of higher learning around the world. Why has the mainstream never demanded the same standards of Big Bang theorists that it does of "paranormal" proponents?

Where are the "double-blind tests" validating Big Bang theory? Has Big Bang theory been tested by JREF or other skeptical organizations?

What about Einstein's theory of relativity? The general public seems unaware that it has always been and is stil a matter of contention among accredited scientists. As Marcus Coleman writes (From <http://www.wbabin.net/physics/marcus.htm>):

"Einstein's relativity was not accepted by a number of his contemporaries. Rutherford, widely thought of as the 'father of nuclear physics', considered it to be nonsense. Columbia University astronomer C.L. Poor in 1922,'26 & '30 gave unassailable refutations of the claims of Eddington, i.e., that observations of the 1919 South American solar eclipse confirmed Einstein's predicted gravitational attraction of light. (Poor also documents a similar situation existing with the 1922 West Australian eclipse and the claims of Campbell & Trumpler.) It was this 'proof' espoused by Eddington however, which brought Einstein his first acclaim and greatest fame.

"Poor showed clearly that the actual observations were not what was claimed and that they did not support Einstein's prediction. This is still a valid refutation of Einstein's presumed gravitational attraction of light, and notwithstanding the 'Gravitational Lensing' phenomenon, still remains standing as an unanswered challenge to Einstein's general theory of relativity and theory of gravitation. As a side issue, this relegates the concept of 'black holes' to pure science fiction as many non-conventional scientists contend - that is, despite evidence of the most recent discoveries being claimed as proof of their existence (even to including the latest data concerning the centre of the Milky Way), such 'proof' does not survive close scrutiny."

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“In their biennial report on the state of science understanding released in April 2002, the National Science Foundation found that 60 percent of adults in the United States agreed or strongly agreed that some people possess psychic powers or extrasensory perception (ESP). In June 2002, the Consumer Analysis Group conducted the most extensive survey ever done in the United Kingdom and revealed that 67 percent of adults believed in psychic powers. Report author Jan Walsh, commenting on the statistics that found that two out of three surveyed believed in an afterlife, said that as far as the British public was concerned, “the supernatural world isn't so paranormal after all.””

The most common type of psychic experience is telepathy, such as when loved ones and close friends from vast distances apart know at the exact time when something traumatic happened to the other. Sometimes, every detail of the traumatic event is observed or felt from afar. They are extremely powerful personal proof. I've had a few of these kind myself. Often, what was suddenly felt out of nowhere about what happened to the loved one is later verified to be true, occurring at exactly the time it was dreamt or felt. This suggests some subconscious telepathic link between people who are close. Experiences of this kind are in fact very common.

Skeptics of course say that these kind of things are nothing but pure coincidence, but this is unsubstantiated and a rush to judgment. They just don't realize that just because something happens that they can't understand doesn't mean that it MUST be coincidence or chance. In the same manner, if someone spoke Spanish and I didn't, that doesn't mean that the person speaking Spanish is speaking random gibberish. If someone living in a tribe in Africa saw me turning channels with my remote and didn't understand how remote controls work, that doesn't mean that my pushing buttons on the remote and the channels changing are just a coincidence!

Mystical Experiences: And what about mystical experiences, spiritual enlightenment,

being "born again", Near Death Experiences and Out of Body Experiences? These can also be said by those who experience them to be extraordinary evidence as well, because they are often self-authenticating and life changing in themselves. As the 1994 New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia states under Mysticism:

"Mysticism in general refers to a direct and immediate experience of the sacred, or the knowledge derived from such an experience... First, the experience is immediate and overwhelming, divorced from the common experience of reality. Second, the experience or the knowledge imparted by it is felt to be self-authenticating, without need of further evidence or justification. Finally, it is held to be ineffable, its essence incapable of being expressed or understood outside the experience itself... the experience itself is always of an Absolute that transcends the human efforts or methods of achieving it. (New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia 1994)"

Experiencers will describe these experiences not as faith-based, but an "inner knowing." The fact that these type of experiences are dramatically life changing makes them "extraordinary evidence" themselves simply because ordinary experiences don't alter people's lives in this way. To say that these self-authenticating, life changing experiences are just pure imagination is closed-minded to say the least. As Faith, a practitioner of Shakti Gaivism and one who has had all-pervasive cosmic transcendental experiences of God in Unity state, constantly reminds us on my email group:

"But remember .. there is "Belief" a chosen activity of mind... and there is an actual Knowing... via direct experience. They are 2 differnt things. I never could accept chosen Belief.. THAT is why I was an Agnostic.

I like the example of the person working in an inner office with no windows. A co-worker could come in and tell them it is raining out. IF they accept That as truth... it is ONLY a chosen belief. But.. If they were to go outside themselves and stand in the driving rain and get soaking wet... then that is no longer a chosen belief... that would qualify as an actual Knowing.. by Direct experience.

Your Mind is Limited... but "YOU" are far greater than your mind... you are ALL that is..... you just cannot see it yet. Mind keeps you contracted.... but You can go beyond individual mind and tap the All Knowing. The only way you can KNOW this... is by experiencing it. I am not talking about "Belief" here... but direct experience. IF you were to accept what I say here.... THAT would be a Belief.... No Good in my book or yours either I am sure. So... I will NOT be disappointed if you do not ACCEPT what

I say.... on the other hand..... You cannot really know that what I say is really illogical babble either..... I think the fairest thing to do is... stay open to the possibilities.... That there are things beyond the scope of Science, things that your current logic based mind has not been exposed to.... but that are none the less Possible.” - Faith

“Extraordinary evidence” is subject to perspective because those who have firsthand direct experience of the phenomena already have their “extraordinary evidence” while others who haven’t, don’t. (See Argument # 5 regarding anecdotal evidence) For instance, those who have had full blown OBE’s already have a realization and knowing that separation of body and spirit can and has taken place, and that there is life after death, especially if they are able to witness specific details at a distance which are later verified as accurate. For them the experience is as apparent as it would be apparent to you whether you were in your own car or house. Similarly, those with transcendent mystical experiences describe it as an “inner knowing” that transcends all description and removes all doubt. In the same fashion, those who have seen Bigfoot or ghosts firsthand at close point-blank-range also have their “extraordinary evidence.”

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 3: The Occam's Razor rule

Stated as: "When there are two competing explanations for an event, the simpler one is more likely."

This argument is a principle that skeptics often misuse to try to force alternate explanations to paranormal ones, even if those explanations involve false accusations or do not fit the facts, while those trying to prove their paranormal explanations will conduct tests that will prove they're correct. Originally, it began as a principle in physics having to do with parsimony, but somehow got twisted into a mantra for invalidating paranormal claims. It was popularized by scientist Carl Sagan in his novel turned movie "Contact", where Jodie Foster quotes it while during a conversation with a theist to defend her belief that God doesn't exist. (Ironically, at the end of the movie it is used against her in a public interrogation by a National Security Agent.) However, an analysis on the facts and assumptions of this argument reveals some obvious problems.

1) First of all, Occam's Razor, termed by 14th Century logician and friar William of Occam, refers to a concept that states that "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily." It was not intended to be used to evaluate claims of the paranormal as skeptics today use it for. As Phil Gibbs points out in "Physics FAQ": (<http://www.weburbia.com/physics/>)

"To begin with we used Occam's razor to separate theories which would predict the same result for all experiments. Now we are trying to choose between theories which make different predictions. This is not what Occam intended...

The principle of simplicity works as a heuristic rule-of-thumb but some people quote it as if it is an axiom of physics. It is not. It can work well in philosophy or particle physics, but less often so in cosmology or psychology, where things usually turn out to be more complicated than you ever expected. Perhaps a quote from Shakespeare would be more appropriate than Occam's razor: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

The law of parsimony is no substitute for insight, logic and the scientific method. It should never be relied upon to make or defend a conclusion. As arbiters of correctness only logical consistency and empirical evidence are absolute."

Even Isaac Newton didn't use Occam's Razor like the skeptics of today do. His version of it was

"We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances." (see same Physics FAQ)

Obviously, he was referring to explanations to explain natural phenomena, not paranormal or supernatural phenomena!

Brian Zeiler explains:

"UFO debunkers do not understand Occam's Razor, and they abuse it regularly. They think they understand it, but they don't.

What it means is that when several hypotheses of varying complexity can explain a set of observations with equal ability, the first one to be tested should be the one that invokes the fewest number of uncorroborated assumptions. If this simplest hypothesis is proven incorrect, the next simplest is chosen, and so forth.

But the skeptics forget two parts: the part regarding the test of the simpler hypotheses, and the part regarding explaining all of the observations.

What a debunker will do is mutilate and butcher the observations until it can be "explained" by one of the simpler hypotheses, which is the inverse

of the proper approach"

2) Second, what is "simpler" is often relative. For example, having telepathic or clairvoyant experiences in some primitive cultures is very common (e.g. Tibetan, African, Amazonian) and those who have such abilities all their lives consider it ordinary. As Phil Gibbs points out in the same Physics FAQ:

"Simplicity is subjective and the universe does not always have the same ideas about simplicity as we do."

Sometimes skeptics will invent an elaborate and far fetched explanation over a paranormal one, anything but a paranormal one is acceptable to them. For example, when Charles Tart did that experiment where a girl had an OBE and read a five digit number on a ledge near the ceiling, the skeptics charged that she was carrying a secret fold out mirror and flashlight.

3) Third, even if we take Occam's Razor at face value the way skeptics use it, just because one explanation is more likely doesn't mean that it's always the correct one. For example, if I toss a die, it is more likely that I will roll numbers 1-5 than a 6. But that doesn't mean that a 6 will never come up. Therefore, occasionally an unlikely explanation can be expected to be true sometimes. However, skeptics treat Occam's Razor as if it were an absolute rule and use it as a label for denying any paranormal claim, no matter how valid.

4) Fourth, skeptics have used Occam's Razor so religiously that they misuse it by inventing false accusations and denying the facts in order to force a simpler more natural explanation. For example, if someone had an amazing psychic reading at a psychic fair (not prearranged) where they were told something very specific that couldn't have been guessed by cold reading, skeptics would start inventing false accusations such as: "Someone who knew you must have tipped off the psychic in advance", "A spy in the room must have overheard you mention the specific detail before the reading", "You must have something in your appearance that reveals the detail", "You must have remembered it wrong since memory is fallible", etc. Even if none of these accusations are true, skeptics will still insist on it simply because it's the simpler explanation to them. Likewise, if someone during an NDE or OBE hears a conversation or witnesses something many miles away and later upon verification, it turns out to be true, the skeptics will say that the simpler explanation is that the patient knew about the detail or conversation beforehand but forgot it. A skeptic did that to me once when I brought up how a psychic was able to tell me that I had a tragic period in my life when I was 9 years old, without any other information or clue from me other than my birth date. He kept insisting that I gave her clues which allowed her to predict that, even though I guaranteed him that I didn't. Examples like these suggest that skeptics are willing to support a false explanation rather than a paranormal one due to their bias.

For more on Occam's Razor, see WikiSynergy's entry on Occam's Razor

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 4: The Invisible Pink Unicorn / Santa Claus gambit

Stated as: “Of course I can't prove that God, spirits, UFO's, paranormal phenomena or metaphysical realities don't exist, but you can't prove to me that invisible pink unicorns and Santa Claus don't exist either, but that doesn't mean that they are real.”

This ridiculous comparison tactic is notoriously common among pseudoskeptics, yet so severely flawed and ludicrous that you have to wonder about the sanity of the person using it. It basically lumps all paranormal phenomena in the same category as anything a skeptic makes up out of thin air. It is more of a belittling tactic than a reasoned argument. Other similar variations of this are “you can't prove to me that there wasn't a dragon hiding in my garage either” and “ you can't prove to me that little green gremlins aren't stealing pennies from my pockets either,” etc.

The premise behind this argument is that if a claim is unprovable, then it's in the same category as everything that is deliberately made up or fictionalized. However, not only is this false and a mere play on words, but it is a complete straw man argument because it falsely redefines the opposing position in terms that make it more easily attackable,

using false comparisons. A simple examination reveals this.

1) First, the main problem with this argument is that what people actually experience is NOT the same thing as what a skeptic deliberately makes up for the sake of argument! To put the two in the same category is both illogical and underhanded. Since the skeptic using this argument hasn't really experienced invisible pink unicorns himself, everyone knows that he is deliberately making up something fictitious to put down something he doesn't believe in while the paranormal experienter or claimant is not. Regardless of whether what the claimant experienced was real or not, it is certainly NOT in the same category as what a skeptic makes up out of thin air. Comparing them would be like comparing my real life experience of visiting a foreign country to any fictitious story you can find such as Peter Pan or The Wizard of Oz. That simply makes no sense, even if misperception was involved on my part in my experience. Not only that, but it would be shady and underhanded as well.

For the skeptic to claim that both are the same because they are unprovable would be like claiming that red cars and red apples are the same thing because they're both red. Though even skeptics know that this is not true, as mentioned, they prefer their beliefs and word games over common sense reality. Alas, if these pseudoskeptics really lived according to their beliefs, then they could not function in society. For example, if they got lost and had to ask for directions, they would not believe any directions given to them, not even from the most credible and well-meaning long-time residents of the area they are lost in. They know this too, and thus this is all a word game to them, not a way to live in reality. So let's just hope for their sake that they don't carry their silly little theories over to real life ...

2) Second, likewise what someone sincerely believes is NOT the same as what someone knowingly makes up. Since the skeptic who uses this argument doesn't believe in invisible pink unicorns himself, it is pointless as well as inconsiderate to compare that to what people genuinely believe and experience, such as God, spirits, or ESP. Of course, just because someone genuinely believes something doesn't make it true, but to compare an honest person to a deliberate fraud is not a valid comparison.

3) Third, if there were millions of credible intelligent adults out there claiming to have seen or experienced invisible pink unicorns, the Tooth Fairy entering homes through bay windows, or Santa Claus flying in the air, then this comparison would have merit. But there aren't, so this comparison is without merit.

4) Fourth, another significant difference between experiencing God, the divine, or the mystical, and the fictional example of invisible pink unicorns is that throughout history millions of honest, sane, intelligent people have experiences with the former which resulted in life changing effects, but the same can't be said for invisible pink unicorns.

5) Fifth, just because something is unprovable does not automatically put it in the same category as everything else that is unprovable. For example, I can't prove what I ate last night for dinner or what I thought about. Without witnesses, I can't prove what I saw on TV or how high I scored in a video game either. But that doesn't mean that these things are in the same category as every story in the fiction section of the library.

The bottom line is that while it is true that no one can disprove the existence of invisible pink unicorns, the evidence to support God, spirits and psychic phenomena, although mostly anecdotal, is vastly greater, more significant, more relevant, and more sincere than the evidence to support invisible pink unicorns, Santa Claus, and other fictitious examples deliberately made up by skeptics.

My close friend and fellow paranormal writer Michael Goodspeed, made similar points against this silly pseudoskeptical argument in his article Mission For ET: Kill Santa:

<http://www.red-ice.net/specialreports/2005/12dec/UFOsanta.html>

"Everyone who has explored the UFO phenomenon has at some point been treated to the infamous "Santa Claus" analogy. Self-styled "skeptics" invoke it religiously (no pun intended) in discussions with anyone who believes there might actually be some evidence of alien visitation on planet Earth.

"If you believe that a UFO crashed in Roswell, then I'm sure Santa will leave some nice presents under your Christmas tree." Any number of variations of this analogy (unicorns, leprechauns, bogeymen, etc.) are used to dismiss on a priori grounds all phenomena that rely heavily on anecdotal evidence and/or human testimony.

The problem with the analogy is that it is pure fabrication. Yes, it is true that no empirical PROOF exists either of aliens or of Santa (at least none that I know of), but only the willfully ignorant, the

deliberately dishonest, or the cataclysmically stupid would ever claim that evidence of ET is no better than evidence of Santa.”

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 5: The “anecdotal evidence is invalid” argument.

Stated as: “All that we have to support paranormal claims is anecdotal evidence, which is unreliable and invalid evidence.”

Corollary: "Anecdotal evidence is worthless as scientific evidence."

"Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world. All knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it." - Albert Einstein

The "anecdotal evidence is invalid" argument is perhaps the one most often used by skeptics, and also the core philosophical difference between believers and skeptics. In fact, this issue is often the impasse point that the debates between believers and skeptics reach. The term "anecdote" technically refers to an unpublished story or personal testimony. But in this case, it refers to any eyewitness account or claim of a paranormal nature without hard evidence to corroborate it.

This classification is one of the main categories that skeptics put paranormal evidence into in order to dismiss it. (Another category being the "unreplicable / uncontrolled" group that scientific experiments supporting psi are often put into. See Argument # 17 and Argument # 18) Skeptics who use this argument often claim that the evidence we have for paranormal claims is largely anecdotal and therefore worthless as scientific evidence. They also claim that anecdotal evidence is invalid because it is largely untestable and subject to error. Some skeptics will even go so far as to say that anecdotal evidence is zero evidence. Not surprisingly though, skeptics tend to quote anecdotal evidence when it supports their side! (another double standard) Therefore it appears that classifying evidence as "anecdotal" is simply a dismissal tactic to try to discredit evidence that skeptics can't explain away.

There are many factual and critical problems with this tactic.

- 1) While it may be true that most of the paranormal evidence is largely anecdotal in nature, by no means is it true that they are worthless or invalid. The fact is that most anecdotes, personal accounts, and what we remember check out most of the time or at least point to something real. Rarely is it ever based on nothing at all. For example, if someone told me that there was a man dressed in a Santa Claus suit at the local mall taking photos with kids, the odds are that if I went to the mall to verify it, it would check out most of the time (and if the Santa dressed man isn't there at the time, he was there

earlier at least). Or, if I went to the supermarket and asked the staff what aisle number the bread was at, most of the time the aisle he would tell me would be the one that has bread. Likewise, if I was inside a building and someone came in and said it was raining outside, most of the time it would check out. Either it would be raining now, or the wet floor would show that it was raining earlier. Similarly, when someone tells me what the ending is of a movie or book, it usually always checks out when I watch the movie or read the book. It's that simple! There are countless examples like this that I could use, most of which are very mundane. Obviously, these types of simple ordinary everyday anecdotes point to something real. Now, since the skeptical philosophy about anecdotes doesn't hold up when applied to simple mundane examples, why should it be used to evaluate paranormal experiences and claims? It makes no sense at all.

One argument I use that always gets these skeptics goes like this. I ask them about a country they've never been to before, such as France for example. And I state it like this: "Since you've never been to France before, and you have no real evidence that it exists other than anecdotes you heard, do you assume then that it doesn't exist for now? After all, the photos, videos, and souvenirs from that country could all be forgeries, you just don't know do you?" The skeptic will usually reply with "But I can fly to France and verify that it exists." And that answer totally misses the point, so I then counter with the key question "Yeah but UNTIL you go to France, do you assume for NOW that it doesn't exist, based on your skeptical philosophy that anecdotal evidence is invalid?" That stumps them EVERYTIME! They NEVER have a response to that one.

Suffice to say, if these skeptics truly believed that anecdotal evidence in general is invalid, then they could not function in life, for they would not believe anything told. They would refuse directions when they are lost, they would disbelieve every story told to them during their family reunions (even by the most honest and credible of their family members), invalidate all reports given to them in their workplace, etc. They know it too, and most likely do not live that way. Therefore, as mentioned before, this is all just a word game play to them, not about seeking the truth.

2) Anecdotal is not considered zero evidence or worthless by our society. Anyone with common sense who isn't detached from society knows this. Courts consider eyewitness testimony as admissible evidence (though not proof). Employers consider reference letters, character references of friends and former employers, and background checks to be evidence of a job candidate's performance. Marketing people conduct surveys to get important useful information about the market. A degree of anecdotal evidence is relied upon in everyday society. Obviously, if anecdotal evidence was of zero value, it wouldn't be like this. But it is, so this demonstrates that

these philosophical skeptics are all about playing a closed-minded philosophical word/labeling game, rather than being realistic about anything. Yet when confronted with reality, they continue to just throw labels and semantics out at them, until those who know better simply ignore them. It's obvious that they either lack the most basic common sense, are in denial, or playing a deliberate game of philosophy.

Factors measuring degree of reliability in anecdotal evidence

3) What these pseudoskeptics don't realize is that not only is anecdotal evidence mostly reliable with regard to everyday things, but its degree of validity is can be measured based on several factors.

- a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims.
- b) The consistency of the observations and claims.
- c) The credibility of the witnesses.
- d) The clarity of and proximity of the observation.
- e) The state of mind of the witnesses.
- f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim.

Here is an elaboration on these variables that determine the degree of reliability of anecdotal evidence, and how they have been more than adequately met for many paranormal phenomena.

a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims. The more eyewitnesses, testimonies, and claims there are, the greater the weight of evidence. Anyone knows that, and almost everyone operates that way, except pseudoskeptics of course. Now, if there was only one claim in the world of a psychic experience, that wouldn't be much. But if a considerable number of people told me the same thing including people I know and trust, then I might think that there could be something to it. And if has to do with a sizable proportion of the world population throughout history, then that's incredibly significant. To put it simply, something is MORE likely to be true the more people

attest to it. It's not an absolute rule of course, just a general tendency overall. In the case of psychic experiences, surveys show that two-thirds of Americans claim to have had them, which is a significant number ranging over two hundred million in this country alone, not counting the rest of the world! Even the skeptical organization CSICOP admits this stat in articles on their website such as <http://www.csicop.org/si/2001-11/alternative.html> and <http://www.csicop.org/list/listarchive/msg00047.html>

b) The consistency in the observations and claims of witnesses. The consistency in the reports we get is also a significant factor that people consider. People trust consistency because it makes lying or mistake much less likely. Of course, consistency in observations and experiences does not mean that what was perceived was really what occurred, but it helps rule out fraud for the most part and points us in the right direction. This criteria is also met for some paranormal phenomena. In multiple witness sightings of ghosts and UFO's for instance, there are accounts of several or more people witnessing the same thing and describing the same details. Even more striking is consistency among people who don't know each other nor live near one another. For example, in the case of NDE's, we have great consistency among experiencers in the form of seeing their body below them, moving through a tunnel, going to a great light of love that some call God, going through a life review, returning with permanent life changes, etc.

c) The credibility of the witnesses. The credibility of those making the reports and claims is also relevant. Factors that influence credibility include integrity, character, whether they've been known to lie before, education and expertise, mental stability, how well we know them personally (obviously you would place more value in the claim of someone you know and trust as opposed to a stranger), etc. We definitely have anecdotal evidence from this group for various paranormal/psychic phenomena. That is indisputable. Doctors and scientists of esteemed reputations have attested to miracles or paranormal phenomena. Trained radar personnel and Air Force observers have observed UFO's both on radar and in the sky. Accomplished quantum physicists have found quantum evidence that make psychic phenomena more plausible, such as the discovery that particles behave differently when observed as opposed to unobserved, the nonlocality and connectedness of twin particles that are split, etc. (see Fred Alan Wolfe's Taking the Quantum Leap and Michael Talbot's The Holographic Universe) Prominent Psychiatrists such as Dr. Brian Weiss, author of Many Lives, Many Masters, have discovered and documented clinical evidence that past life memories are real and can be verified. Besides experts, people that we know and trust also claim to experience or observed things of a paranormal nature. Note that I'm not saying that an appeal to authority means that it's right, only that it carries more weight as a general rule.

d) The proximity and clarity of the observation. How close and clear an observation or experience takes place also an important factor. If someone thinks they see Bigfoot as a speck in the distance, then it could be dismissed as almost anything. However, if they saw Bigfoot at close-up point-blank-range, then it would be much more compelling and harder to dismiss. For the person to be mistaken at point-blank-range, he/she would have to be either lying or greatly hallucinating and in need of help. Otherwise, the skeptics should do some serious thinking about their beliefs! Again, this criteria has been met for some paranormal phenomena such as Bigfoot, UFO's and apparitions, which have been reportedly seen at point-blank-range in crystal clarity. Any research into will reveal lists of testimonials of this close-up nature.

e) The state of mind of the witness at the time. Another variable is the mental state of the witness, which include factors such as their alertness level, fatigue level, intoxication level, emotional level, fear and panic level, etc. This criteria has also been satisfied for paranormal/psychic phenomena because many of the witnesses were sober, awake and sane at the time of their observations and experiences.

f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim. Whether the witnesses profit in any way is also a factor to consider, since it would put doubt on their sincerity if they have ulterior motives which might skew their objectivity. On the other hand, if they have nothing to gain then they are less likely to be manipulating us unless it was out of their genuine belief. This is especially so if they've suffered ridicule and damage to their reputation for their claims. The latter has been true for both paranormal experiencers as well as those who made new discoveries that validated paranormal phenomena. Esteemed scientists and experts in their fields have risked their reputations to share their discoveries. These include physicist David Bohm (a protégé of Einstein and author of Wholeness and the Implicate Order) who postulated consciousness related quantum physics theories that contradicted the reductionist views of the universe, Miami Chair of Psychiatry Dr. Brian Weiss (author of Many Lives, Many Masters) who endured ridicule and criticism from his peers for his clinical reports and discoveries in past life regression, and others.

Now of course not all of the evidence for every paranormal and psychic phenomena have met all these criteria, but many of them have met some or all of them. Therefore we can conclude that the evidence for them is overwhelmingly strong, and certainly not zero evidence like pseudoskeptics claim.

In reality though, anecdotes are part of the scientific process of collecting raw data. They may not constitute scientific proof, but they are definitely a form of evidence. One of the world's top NDE experts, Dr. Peter Fenwick, explained this to a caller on a radio show here:

This isn't saying of course, that we should believe every anecdotal claim out there, which would be foolish. But just because an anecdotal claim doesn't fit one's world view, doesn't mean that it must be due to mistake, fraud or hallucination. The bottom line here is that although lots of people saying something doesn't mean it's true, (the ad populum argument) it at makes it MORE LIKELY to be true compared to if no one at all said it was true.

Ordinarily, anecdotal evidence this strong is accepted as valid evidence in normal situations, so why not in regard to paranormal or psychic phenomena, especially when it's so common? The reason is because pseudoskeptics don't think these things are possible, therefore they assume that the fallibility of anecdotes must be the cause. In my experience with skeptics, no matter how much evidence you give them, they will still find excuses to reject them, even if it means imposing double standards, denying facts or preferring false explanations over paranormal ones. It is apparent that closed-minded skeptics aren't looking for evidence, but ways to shut it out to protect their views. After all, if they were really looking for evidence, then why would they shut it out every time it comes up?

It can also be said that the skeptic's subjective dismissal of another's experience is just as unreliable as any anecdotal evidence. Greg Stone, a consciousness expert and fierce knowledgeable debater on my discussion list, makes some intriguing points about how skeptics treat anecdotal evidence:

(referring to the writings of Skeptic Paul Kurtz):

"I suggest that rather than rejecting the eyewitness accounts of so many as unreliable, that he understand that his offhand subjective dismissal of another's experience is equally unreliable. What is missing is his attempt at understanding what is -- based upon the accounts. That they are laden with the complexity of personal observation

does not mean the underlying phenomena are not actual and real. The confusion of the scientist in sorting out complex evidence does not itself render the phenomena unreal...it only means the scientist lacks the insight or tools to do the work. Only a fool of a scientist would dismiss the evidence and reports in front of him and substitute his own beliefs in their place."

The Ebay feedback challenge that a pseudoskeptic failed and was caught lying red-handed

To give you an example of the ridiculous extent they will carry this argument to, I once tested the skeptics on my own list by asking them if they a) considered the feedback rating on Ebay.com to be of any significance, and b) if they would trust someone more if they had a higher feedback rating rather than a negative one, and c) if they would bid on an item from a person with a 99 percent positive feedback rating or someone with much less and many negative comments in their seller profile. This was a no-win situation for them, for if they admitted that feedback ratings mattered in their decisions, then they would be acknowledging that anecdotal evidence was evidence after all. If they didn't, and remained consistent, then they would be denying a simple reality that every user of Ebay, even fools and children, knew, which was that the higher the positive feedback rating on a seller, the more reliable and trustworthy, and vice versa. Yet these skeptics chose the latter, giving plenty of outlandish reasons for doing so, saying that feedback ratings didn't affect their decisions on Ebay, even claiming that they were too easily faked. It was obvious they knew nothing about Ebay and the mechanisms set in place to prevent such things. One who calls himself Dr. H said:

> }> Feedback rating are not a reliable indicator
> }> because
> }> the feedback ratings themselves are unreliable.

I challenged Dr. H to find me even one experienced Ebay seller (with over a thousand positive feedback comments) who would agree that feedback ratings mean nothing with regard to trustworthiness. They couldn't and didn't. Though Dr. H claimed to have used Ebay before, he refused to give me his Ebay username ID (which was public information anyway) so I could check up on how experienced he really was in Ebay transactions. After dodging the question many times, he finally answered:

> }Again, what is your Ebay user name? Let me check

> to
> }see how experienced you are.
> }
> }WELL??????? Why did you dodge the question?
>
> I don't give out my personal information casually.
>
> That's one of the reasons that I don't get scammed.

Then, he agreed to give me his Ebay username after I give him my social security number, driver's license, and credit card information.

> }> }Dr H, let me see how experienced you are on
> Ebay.
> }> }Tell me your Ebay user name so I can look up
> your
> }> }transactions. If you want to look me up, my
> user
> }> name
> }> }is WWu777.
> }>
> }> First give me your SS#, driver's license #, and
> }> major credit card #
> }> with expiration date. Oh and the 3-digit
> security
> }> code on the back, too.
> }>
> }> LOL.
> }>
> }> Dr H

When I called his bluff and provided that information, he didn't follow through. How can you trust these bet-welching skeptics to seek the truth? When I pressed him on it, he finally gave me a username "Hiawatha".

However, the user ID "Hiawatha" had ZERO feedbacks on Ebay, proving that he lied about having a lot of experience on Ebay! Furthermore, the user name "Hiawatha" was listed as being located in Michigan, whereas this Dr H fellow is supposed to be from Oregon. Ebay sublisted other variations of the user ID name he gave me, but none were from Oregon. You can look it up yourself. If you go to Ebay and do a search for

that user name "Hiawatha", here is what will come up:

<http://search.ebay.com/ws/search/MemberSearchResult?frompage=fmrshowpage&userid=Hiawatha&fcl=3&%3Bsspagename=h%3Ah%3Aadvsearch%3AUS&frpp=50&sa cat=-1&nojspr=y&fsop=1&catref=C5&fsoo=1&from=R7&nojspr=y&pfid=0>

hiawatha (0)

7 years 10 months

MI, United States

Under that, Ebay lists these similar variations.

Close Matches:

h1awatha (160)

2 years 7 months

United Kingdom

haiwatha (383)

4 years 1 month

Germany

hawatha (28)

3 years 9 months

MA, United States

hia_watha (103)

4 years 10 months

CA, United States

hiawaitha (214) [Go to member's eBay Store](#)

3 years 9 months

Netherlands

Hiawaitha`s Wigwam

hiawatha. (4)

5 years 7 months

IL, United States

hiawatha9 (62)

3 years 8 months

ME, United States

hiawathad (5)

6 years 8 months

WA, United States

1hiawatha (1)

1 year 10 months

VT, United States

6hiawatha (2)

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WI, United States

hiawartha (4)

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Germany

hiawatha5 (9)

6 years 3 months

VA, United States

hiawatha6 (14)

6 years 1 month

FL, United States

hiawathia (2)

3 years 11 months

MI, United States

As you can see, the user name he gave me, "Hiawatha", has ZERO feedback, and the user name is listed as being from Michigan too. And none of the close matches Ebay lists have a Hiawatha from Oregon either. How odd. Dr H claimed to have some feedback on Ebay, and that he lives in Oregon. I've even called him out of the internet yellow pages before at his Eugene, OR residence and got him on the phone.

Dr H has been TOTALLY UNABLE to explain this discrepancy. Instead, he sidestepped it and questioned my ability to look up Ebay user names (like that's soooooooo hard). It's funny of him to say that, since he has zero feedbacks whereas my Ebay user name "WWu777" now has 84 feedback points, demonstrating that I am a real Ebay user while he is a pseudo and fraud.

Those are the undeniable facts.

To further expose his BS, I challenged Dr H to email my Ebay user name from his through Ebay's site, to prove that it is his. Anyone can send a message from their

Ebay user name to another. Yet he refused to comply, or respond to the request, cause deep down, he knows he can't, cause he gave a false Ebay user name, and has no way to weasel out of it. So he remained silent about it.

Now, if these pseudoskeptics are dishonest about such little things, then why should we trust them in matters of the afterlife, paranormal, and scientific research?! This is the kind of fishy dodgeball they play. Obviously, this big argument of theirs that "anecdotal evidence is invalid" doesn't even work with simple down-to-earth venues like online auction transactions, so why use it as a measuring tool for reality and truth? Anyone with common sense knows that in regard to Ebay feedback being relevant, they are utterly and completely wrong. Yet, as I mentioned, these skeptics are not about truth or reality at all, but about playing philosophical word games.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 5: The “anecdotal evidence is invalid” argument.

Stated as: “All that we have to support paranormal claims is anecdotal evidence, which is unreliable and invalid evidence.”

Corollary: “Anecdotal evidence is worthless as scientific evidence.”

“Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world. All knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it.” - Albert Einstein

The “anecdotal evidence is invalid” argument is perhaps the one most often used by skeptics, and also the core philosophical difference between believers and skeptics. In fact, this issue is often the impasse point that the debates between believers and skeptics reach. The term “anecdote” technically refers to an unpublished story or personal testimony. But in this case, it refers to any eyewitness account or claim of a paranormal nature without hard evidence to corroborate it.

This classification is one of the main categories that skeptics put paranormal evidence into in order to dismiss it. (Another category being the “unreplicable / uncontrolled” group that scientific experiments supporting psi are often put into. See Argument # 17 and Argument # 18) Skeptics who use this argument often claim that the evidence we have for paranormal claims is largely anecdotal and therefore worthless as scientific evidence. They also claim that anecdotal evidence is invalid because it is largely untestable and subject to error. Some skeptics will even go so far as to say that anecdotal evidence is zero evidence. Not surprisingly though, skeptics tend to quote anecdotal evidence when it supports their side! (another double standard) Therefore it appears that classifying evidence as “anecdotal” is simply a dismissal tactic to try to discredit evidence that skeptics can’t explain away.

There are many factual and critical problems with this tactic.

1) While it may be true that most of the paranormal evidence is largely anecdotal in nature, by no means is it true that they are worthless or invalid. The fact is that most anecdotes, personal accounts, and what we remember check out most of the time or at least point to something real. Rarely is it ever based on nothing at all. For example, if someone told me that there was a man dressed in a Santa Claus suit at the local mall taking photos with kids, the odds are that if I went to the mall to verify it, it would check out most of the time (and if the Santa dressed man isn't there at the time, he was there earlier at least). Or, if I went to the supermarket and asked the staff what aisle number the bread was at, most of the time the aisle he would tell me would be the one that has bread. Likewise, if I was inside a building and someone came in and said it was raining outside, most of the time it would check out. Either it would be raining now, or the wet floor would show that it was raining earlier. Similarly, when someone tells me what the ending is of a movie or book, it usually always checks out when I watch the movie or read the book. It's that simple! There are countless examples like this that I could use, most of which are very mundane. Obviously, these types of simple ordinary everyday anecdotes point to something real. Now, since the skeptical philosophy about anecdotes doesn't hold up when applied to simple mundane examples, why should it be used to evaluate paranormal experiences and claims? It makes no sense at all.

One argument I use that always gets these skeptics goes like this. I ask them about a country they've never been to before, such as France for example. And I state it like this: "Since you've never been to France before, and you have no real evidence that it exists other than anecdotes you heard, do you assume then that it doesn't exist for now? After all, the photos, videos, and souvenirs from that country could all be forgeries, you just don't know do you?" The skeptic will usually reply with "But I can fly to France and verify that it exists." And that answer totally misses the point, so I then counter with the key question "Yeah but UNTIL you go to France, do you assume for NOW that it doesn't exist, based on your skeptical philosophy that anecdotal evidence is invalid?" That stumps them EVERYTIME! They NEVER have a response to that one.

Suffice to say, if these skeptics truly believed that anecdotal evidence in general is invalid, then they could not function in life, for they would not believe anything told. They would refuse directions when they are lost, they would disbelieve every story told

to them during their family reunions (even by the most honest and credible of their family members), invalidate all reports given to them in their workplace, etc. They know it too, and most likely do not live that way. Therefore, as mentioned before, this is all just a word game play to them, not about seeking the truth.

2) Anecdotal is not considered zero evidence or worthless by our society. Anyone with common sense who isn't detached from society knows this. Courts consider eyewitness testimony as admissible evidence (though not proof). Employers consider reference letters, character references of friends and former employers, and background checks to be evidence of a job candidate's performance. Marketing people conduct surveys to get important useful information about the market. A degree of anecdotal evidence is relied upon in everyday society. Obviously, if anecdotal evidence was of zero value, it wouldn't be like this. But it is, so this demonstrates that these philosophical skeptics are all about playing a closed-minded philosophical word/labeling game, rather than being realistic about anything. Yet when confronted with reality, they continue to just throw labels and semantics out at them, until those who know better simply ignore them. It's obvious that they either lack the most basic common sense, are in denial, or playing a deliberate game of philosophy.

Factors measuring degree of reliability in anecdotal evidence

3) What these pseudoskeptics don't realize is that not only is anecdotal evidence mostly reliable with regard to everyday things, but its degree of validity is can be measured based on several factors.

- a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims.
- b) The consistency of the observations and claims.
- c) The credibility of the witnesses.
- d) The clarity of and proximity of the observation.
- e) The state of mind of the witnesses.
- f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim.

Here is an elaboration on these variables that determine the degree of reliability of anecdotal evidence, and how they have been more than adequately met for many paranormal phenomena.

a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims. The more eyewitnesses, testimonies, and claims there are, the greater the weight of evidence. Anyone knows that, and almost everyone operates that way, except pseudoskeptics of course. Now, if there was only one claim in the world of a psychic experience, that wouldn't be much. But if a considerable number of people told me the same thing including people I know and trust, then I might think that there could be something to it. And if has to do with a sizable proportion of the world population throughout history, then that's incredibly significant. To put it simply, something is MORE likely to be true the more people attest to it. It's not an absolute rule of course, just a general tendency overall. In the case of psychic experiences, surveys show that two-thirds of Americans claim to have had them, which is a significant number ranging over two hundred million in this country alone, not counting the rest of the world! Even the skeptical organization CSICOP admits this stat in articles on their website such as <http://www.csicop.org/si/2001-11/alternative.html> and <http://www.csicop.org/list/listarchive/msg00047.html>

b) The consistency in the observations and claims of witnesses. The consistency in the reports we get is also a significant factor that people consider. People trust consistency because it makes lying or mistake much less likely. Of course, consistency in observations and experiences does not mean that what was perceived was really what occurred, but it helps rule out fraud for the most part and points us in the right direction. This criteria is also met for some paranormal phenomena. In multiple witness sightings of ghosts and UFO's for instance, there are accounts of several or more people witnessing the same thing and describing the same details. Even more striking is consistency among people who don't know each other nor live near one another. For example, in the case of NDE's, we have great consistency among experiencers in the form of seeing their body below them, moving through a tunnel, going to a great light of love that some call God, going through a life review, returning with permanent life changes, etc.

c) The credibility of the witnesses. The credibility of those making the reports and claims is also relevant. Factors that influence credibility include integrity, character, whether they've been known to lie before, education and expertise, mental stability, how well we know them personally (obviously you would place more value in the claim of someone you know and trust as opposed to a stranger), etc. We definitely have

anecdotal evidence from this group for various paranormal/psychic phenomena. That is indisputable. Doctors and scientists of esteemed reputations have attested to miracles or paranormal phenomena. Trained radar personnel and Air Force observers have observed UFO's both on radar and in the sky. Accomplished quantum physicists have found quantum evidence that make psychic phenomena more plausible, such as the discovery that particles behave differently when observed as opposed to unobserved, the nonlocality and connectedness of twin particles that are split, etc. (see Fred Alan Wolfe's Taking the Quantum Leap and Michael Talbot's The Holographic Universe) Prominent Psychiatrists such as Dr. Brian Weiss, author of Many Lives, Many Masters, have discovered and documented clinical evidence that past life memories are real and can be verified. Besides experts, people that we know and trust also claim to experience or observed things of a paranormal nature. Note that I'm not saying that an appeal to authority means that it's right, only that it carries more weight as a general rule.

d) The proximity and clarity of the observation. How close and clear an observation or experience takes place also an important factor. If someone thinks they see Bigfoot as a speck in the distance, then it could be dismissed as almost anything. However, if they saw Bigfoot at close-up point-blank-range, then it would be much more compelling and harder to dismiss. For the person to be mistaken at point-blank-range, he/she would have to be either lying or greatly hallucinating and in need of help. Otherwise, the skeptics should do some serious thinking about their beliefs! Again, this criteria has been met for some paranormal phenomena such as Bigfoot, UFO's and apparitions, which have been reportedly seen at point-blank-range in crystal clarity. Any research into will reveal lists of testimonials of this close-up nature.

e) The state of mind of the witness at the time. Another variable is the mental state of the witness, which include factors such as their alertness level, fatigue level, intoxication level, emotional level, fear and panic level, etc. This criteria has also been satisfied for paranormal/psychic phenomena because many of the witnesses were sober, awake and sane at the time of their observations and experiences.

f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim. Whether the witnesses profit in any way is also a factor to consider, since it would put doubt on their sincerity if they have ulterior motives which might skew their objectivity. On the other hand, if they have nothing to gain then they are less likely to be manipulating us unless it was out of their genuine belief. This is especially so if they've suffered ridicule and damage to their reputation for their claims. The latter has been true for both paranormal experiencers as well as those who made new discoveries that validated paranormal phenomena. Esteemed scientists and experts in their fields have

risked their reputations to share their discoveries. These include physicist David Bohm (a protégé of Einstein and author of Wholeness and the Implicate Order) who postulated consciousness related quantum physics theories that contradicted the reductionist views of the universe, Miami Chair of Psychiatry Dr. Brian Weiss (author of Many Lives, Many Masters) who endured ridicule and criticism from his peers for his clinical reports and discoveries in past life regression, and others.

Now of course not all of the evidence for every paranormal and psychic phenomena have met all these criteria, but many of them have met some or all of them. Therefore we can conclude that the evidence for them is overwhelmingly strong, and certainly not zero evidence like pseudoskeptics claim.

In reality though, anecdotes are part of the scientific process of collecting raw data. They may not constitute scientific proof, but they are definitely a form of evidence. One of the world's top NDE experts, Dr. Peter Fenwick, explained this to a caller on a radio show here:

This isn't saying of course, that we should believe every anecdotal claim out there, which would be foolish. But just because an anecdotal claim doesn't fit one's world view, doesn't mean that it must be due to mistake, fraud or hallucination. The bottom line here is that although lots of people saying something doesn't mean it's true, (the ad populum argument) it at makes it MORE LIKELY to be true compared to if no one at all said it was true.

Ordinarily, anecdotal evidence this strong is accepted as valid evidence in normal situations, so why not in regard to paranormal or psychic phenomena, especially when it's so common? The reason is because pseudoskeptics don't think these things are possible, therefore they assume that the fallibility of anecdotes must be the cause. In my experience with skeptics, no matter how much evidence you give them, they will still find excuses to reject them, even if it means imposing double standards, denying facts or preferring false explanations over paranormal ones. It is apparent that closed-minded skeptics aren't looking for evidence, but ways to shut it out to protect their views. After all, if they were really looking for evidence, then why would they shut it out every time it comes up?

It can also be said that the skeptic's subjective dismissal of another's experience is just as unreliable as any anecdotal evidence. Greg Stone, a consciousness expert and fierce knowledgeable debater on my discussion list, makes some intriguing points about how skeptics treat anecdotal evidence:

(referring to the writings of Skeptic Paul Kurtz):

"I suggest that rather than rejecting the eyewitness accounts of so many as unreliable, that he understand that his offhand subjective dismissal of another's experience is equally unreliable. What is missing is his attempt at understanding what is -- based upon the accounts. That they are laden with the complexity of personal observation does not mean the underlying phenomena are not actual and real. The confusion of the scientist in sorting out complex evidence does not itself render the phenomena unreal...it only means the scientist lacks the insight or tools to do the work. Only a fool of a scientist would dismiss the evidence and reports in front of him and substitute his own beliefs in their place."

The Ebay feedback challenge that a pseudoskeptic failed and was caught lying red-handed

To give you an example of the ridiculous extent they will carry this argument to, I once tested the skeptics on my own list by asking them if they a) considered the feedback rating on Ebay.com to be of any significance, and b) if they would trust someone more if they had a higher feedback rating rather than a negative one, and c) if they would bid on an item from a person with a 99 percent positive feedback rating or someone with much less and many negative comments in their seller profile. This was a no-win situation for them, for if they admitted that feedback ratings mattered in their decisions, then they would be acknowledging that anecdotal evidence was evidence after all. If they didn't, and remained consistent, then they would be denying a simple reality that every user of Ebay, even fools and children, knew, which was that the higher the positive feedback rating on a seller, the more reliable and trustworthy, and vice versa. Yet these skeptics chose the latter, giving plenty of outlandish reasons for doing so, saying that feedback ratings didn't affect their decisions on Ebay, even claiming that they were too easily faked. It was obvious they knew nothing about Ebay and the mechanisms set in place to prevent such things. One who calls himself Dr. H said:

> }> Feedback rating are not a reliable indicator
> }> because
> }> the feedback ratings themselves are unreliable.

I challenged Dr. H to find me even one experienced Ebay seller (with over a thousand positive feedback comments) who would agree that feedback ratings mean nothing with regard to trustworthiness. They couldn't and didn't. Though Dr. H claimed to have used Ebay before, he refused to give me his Ebay username ID (which was public information anyway) so I could check up on how experienced he really was in Ebay transactions. After dodging the question many times, he finally answered:

> }Again, what is your Ebay user name? Let me check
> to
> }see how experienced you are.
> }
> }WELL??????? Why did you dodge the question?
>
> I don't give out my personal information casually.
>
> That's one of the reasons that I don't get scammed.

Then, he agreed to give me his Ebay username after I give him my social security number, driver's license, and credit card information.

> }> }Dr H, let me see how experienced you are on
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- f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim.

Here is an elaboration on these variables that determine the degree of reliability of anecdotal evidence, and how they have been more than adequately met for many paranormal phenomena.

a) The number of eyewitnesses, testimonials and claims. The more eyewitnesses, testimonies, and claims there are, the greater the weight of evidence. Anyone knows that, and almost everyone operates that way, except pseudoskeptics of course. Now, if there was only one claim in the world of a psychic experience, that wouldn't be much. But if a considerable number of people told me the same thing including people I know and trust, then I might think that there could be something to it. And if has to do with a sizable proportion of the world population throughout history, then that's incredibly significant. To put it simply, something is MORE likely to be true the more people attest to it. It's not an absolute rule of course, just a general tendency overall. In the case of psychic experiences, surveys show that two-thirds of Americans claim to have had them, which is a significant number ranging over two hundred million in this country alone, not counting the rest of the world! Even the skeptical organization CSICOP admits this stat in articles on their website such as <http://www.csicop.org/si/2001-11/alternative.html> and <http://www.csicop.org/list/listarchive/msg00047.html>

b) The consistency in the observations and claims of witnesses. The consistency in the reports we get is also a significant factor that people consider. People trust consistency because it makes lying or mistake much less likely. Of course, consistency in observations and experiences does not mean that what was perceived was really what occurred, but it helps rule out fraud for the most part and points us in the right direction. This criteria is also met for some paranormal phenomena. In multiple witness sightings of ghosts and UFO's for instance, there are accounts of

several or more people witnessing the same thing and describing the same details. Even more striking is consistency among people who don't know each other nor live near one another. For example, in the case of NDE's, we have great consistency among experiencers in the form of seeing their body below them, moving through a tunnel, going to a great light of love that some call God, going through a life review, returning with permanent life changes, etc.

c) The credibility of the witnesses. The credibility of those making the reports and claims is also relevant. Factors that influence credibility include integrity, character, whether they've been known to lie before, education and expertise, mental stability, how well we know them personally (obviously you would place more value in the claim of someone you know and trust as opposed to a stranger), etc. We definitely have anecdotal evidence from this group for various paranormal/psychic phenomena. That is indisputable. Doctors and scientists of esteemed reputations have attested to miracles or paranormal phenomena. Trained radar personnel and Air Force observers have observed UFO's both on radar and in the sky. Accomplished quantum physicists have found quantum evidence that make psychic phenomena more plausible, such as the discovery that particles behave differently when observed as opposed to unobserved, the nonlocality and connectedness of twin particles that are split, etc. (see Fred Alan Wolfe's Taking the Quantum Leap and Michael Talbot's The Holographic Universe) Prominent Psychiatrists such as Dr. Brian Weiss, author of Many Lives, Many Masters, have discovered and documented clinical evidence that past life memories are real and can be verified. Besides experts, people that we know and trust also claim to experience or observed things of a paranormal nature. Note that I'm not saying that an appeal to authority means that it's right, only that it carries more weight as a general rule.

d) The proximity and clarity of the observation. How close and clear an observation or experience takes place also an important factor. If someone thinks they see Bigfoot as a speck in the distance, then it could be dismissed as almost anything. However, if they saw Bigfoot at close-up point-blank-range, then it would be much more compelling and harder to dismiss. For the person to be mistaken at point-blank-range, he/she would have to be either lying or greatly hallucinating and in need of help. Otherwise, the skeptics should do some serious thinking about their beliefs! Again, this criteria has been met for some paranormal phenomena such as Bigfoot, UFO's and apparitions, which have been reportedly seen at point-blank-range in crystal clarity. Any research into will reveal lists of testimonials of this close-up nature.

e) The state of mind of the witness at the time. Another variable is the mental state of the witness, which include factors such as their alertness level, fatigue level, intoxication

level, emotional level, fear and panic level, etc. This criteria has also been satisfied for paranormal/psychic phenomena because many of the witnesses were sober, awake and sane at the time of their observations and experiences.

f) What the witnesses/experiencers stand to gain from their testimony or claim. Whether the witnesses profit in any way is also a factor to consider, since it would put doubt on their sincerity if they have ulterior motives which might skew their objectivity. On the other hand, if they have nothing to gain then they are less likely to be manipulating us unless it was out of their genuine belief. This is especially so if they've suffered ridicule and damage to their reputation for their claims. The latter has been true for both paranormal experiencers as well as those who made new discoveries that validated paranormal phenomena. Esteemed scientists and experts in their fields have risked their reputations to share their discoveries. These include physicist David Bohm (a protégé of Einstein and author of Wholeness and the Implicate Order) who postulated consciousness related quantum physics theories that contradicted the reductionist views of the universe, Miami Chair of Psychiatry Dr. Brian Weiss (author of Many Lives, Many Masters) who endured ridicule and criticism from his peers for his clinical reports and discoveries in past life regression, and others.

Now of course not all of the evidence for every paranormal and psychic phenomena have met all these criteria, but many of them have met some or all of them. Therefore we can conclude that the evidence for them is overwhelmingly strong, and certainly not zero evidence like pseudoskeptics claim.

In reality though, anecdotes are part of the scientific process of collecting raw data. They may not constitute scientific proof, but they are definitely a form of evidence. One of the world's top NDE experts, Dr. Peter Fenwick, explained this to a caller on a radio show here:

This isn't saying of course, that we should believe every anecdotal claim out there, which would be foolish. But just because an anecdotal claim doesn't fit one's world view, doesn't mean that it must be due to mistake, fraud or hallucination. The bottom line here is that although lots of people saying something doesn't mean it's true, (the ad populum argument) it at makes it MORE LIKELY to be true compared to if no one at all said it was true.

Ordinarily, anecdotal evidence this strong is accepted as valid evidence in normal situations, so why not in regard to paranormal or psychic phenomena, especially when it's so common? The reason is because pseudoskeptics don't think these things are possible, therefore they assume that the fallibility of anecdotes must be the cause. In my experience with skeptics, no matter how much evidence you give them, they will still find excuses to reject them, even if it means imposing double standards, denying facts or preferring false explanations over paranormal ones. It is apparent that closed-minded skeptics aren't looking for evidence, but ways to shut it out to protect their views. After all, if they were really looking for evidence, then why would they shut it out every time it comes up?

It can also be said that the skeptic's subjective dismissal of another's experience is just as unreliable as any anecdotal evidence. Greg Stone, a consciousness expert and fierce knowledgeable debater on my discussion list, makes some intriguing points about how skeptics treat anecdotal evidence:

(referring to the writings of Skeptic Paul Kurtz):

"I suggest that rather than rejecting the eyewitness accounts of so many as unreliable, that he understand that his offhand subjective dismissal of another's experience is equally unreliable. What is missing is his attempt at understanding what is -- based upon the accounts. That they are laden with the complexity of personal observation does not mean the underlying phenomena are not actual and real. The confusion of the scientist in sorting out complex evidence does not itself render the phenomena unreal...it only means the scientist lacks the insight or tools to do the work. Only a fool of a scientist would dismiss the evidence and reports in front of him and substitute his own beliefs in their place."

The Ebay feedback challenge that a pseudoskeptic failed and was caught lying red-handed

To give you an example of the ridiculous extent they will carry this argument to, I once tested the skeptics on my own list by asking them if they a) considered the feedback rating on Ebay.com to be of any significance, and b) if they would trust someone more if they had a higher feedback rating rather than a negative one, and c) if they would bid on

an item from a person with a 99 percent positive feedback rating or someone with much less and many negative comments in their seller profile. This was a no-win situation for them, for if they admitted that feedback ratings mattered in their decisions, then they would be acknowledging that anecdotal evidence was evidence after all. If they didn't, and remained consistent, then they would be denying a simple reality that every user of Ebay, even fools and children, knew, which was that the higher the positive feedback rating on a seller, the more reliable and trustworthy, and vice versa. Yet these skeptics chose the latter, giving plenty of outlandish reasons for doing so, saying that feedback ratings didn't affect their decisions on Ebay, even claiming that they were too easily faked. It was obvious they knew nothing about Ebay and the mechanisms set in place to prevent such things. One who calls himself Dr. H said:

> }> Feedback rating are not a reliable indicator
> }> because
> }> the feedback ratings themselves are unreliable.

I challenged Dr. H to find me even one experienced Ebay seller (with over a thousand positive feedback comments) who would agree that feedback ratings mean nothing with regard to trustworthiness. They couldn't and didn't. Though Dr. H claimed to have used Ebay before, he refused to give me his Ebay username ID (which was public information anyway) so I could check up on how experienced he really was in Ebay transactions. After dodging the question many times, he finally answered:

> }Again, what is your Ebay user name? Let me check
> to
> }see how experienced you are.
> }
> }WELL??????? Why did you dodge the question?
>
> I don't give out my personal information casually.
>
> That's one of the reasons that I don't get scammed.

Then, he agreed to give me his Ebay username after I give him my social security number, driver's license, and credit card information.

> }> }Dr H, let me see how experienced you are on
> Ebay.

> }> }Tell me your Ebay user name so I can look up
> your
> }> }transactions. If you want to look me up, my
> user
> }> name
> }> }is WWu777.
> }>
> }> First give me your SS#, driver's license #, and
> }> major credit card #
> }> with expiration date. Oh and the 3-digit
> security
> }> code on the back, too.
> }>
> }> LOL.
> }>
> }> Dr H

When I called his bluff and provided that information, he didn't follow through. How can you trust these bet-welching skeptics to seek the truth? When I pressed him on it, he finally gave me a username "Hiawatha".

However, the user ID "Hiawatha" had ZERO feedbacks on Ebay, proving that he lied about having a lot of experience on Ebay! Furthermore, the user name "Hiawatha" was listed as being located in Michigan, whereas this Dr H fellow is supposed to be from Oregon. Ebay sublisted other variations of the user ID name he gave me, but none were from Oregon. You can look it up yourself. If you go to Ebay and do a search for that user name "Hiawatha", here is what will come up:

<http://search.ebay.com/ws/search/MemberSearchResult?frompage=fmrshowpage&userid=Hiawatha&fcl=3&%3Bsspagename=h%3Ah%3Aadvsearch%3AUS&frpp=50&sa cat=-1&nojspr=y&fsop=1&catref=C5&fsop=1&from=R7&nojspr=y&pfid=0>

hiawatha (0)

7 years 10 months

MI, United States

Under that, Ebay lists these similar variations.

Close Matches:

h1awatha (160)

2 years 7 months

United Kingdom

haiwatha (383)

4 years 1 month

Germany

hawatha (28)

3 years 9 months

MA, United States

hia_watha (103)

4 years 10 months

CA, United States

hiawaitha (214) [Go to member's eBay Store](#)

3 years 9 months

Netherlands

Hiawaitha`s Wigwam

hiawatha. (4)

5 years 7 months

IL, United States

hiawatha9 (62)

3 years 8 months

ME, United States

hiawathad (5)

6 years 8 months

WA, United States

1hiawatha (1)

1 year 10 months

VT, United States

6hiawatha (2)

1 year 10 months

WI, United States

hiawartha (4)

3 years 7 months

Germany

hiawatha5 (9)

6 years 3 months

VA, United States

hiawatha6 (14)

6 years 1 month

FL, United States

hiawathia (2)

3 years 11 months

MI, United States

As you can see, the user name he gave me, "Hiawatha", has ZERO feedback, and the user name is listed as being from Michigan too. And none of the close matches Ebay lists have a Hiawatha from Oregon either. How odd. Dr H claimed to have some feedback on Ebay, and that he lives in Oregon. I've even called him out of the internet yellow pages before at his Eugene, OR residence and got him on the phone.

Dr H has been TOTALLY UNABLE to explain this discrepancy. Instead, he sidestepped it and questioned my ability to look up Ebay user names (like that's soooooooooo hard). It's funny of him to say that, since he has zero feedbacks whereas my Ebay user name "WWu777" now has 84 feedback points, demonstrating that I am a real Ebay user while he is a pseudo and fraud.

Those are the undeniable facts.

To further expose his BS, I challenged Dr H to email my Ebay user name from his through Ebay's site, to prove that it is his. Anyone can send a message from their Ebay user name to another. Yet he refused to comply, or respond to the request, cause deep down, he knows he can't, cause he gave a false Ebay user name, and has no way to weasel out of it. So he remained silent about it.

Now, if these pseudoskeptics are dishonest about such little things, then why should we trust them in matters of the afterlife, paranormal, and scientific research?! This is the kind of fishy dodgeball they play. Obviously, this big argument of theirs that "anecdotal evidence is invalid" doesn't even work with simple down-to-earth venues like online auction transactions, so why use it as a measuring tool for reality and truth? Anyone with common sense knows that in regard to Ebay feedback being relevant, they are utterly and completely wrong. Yet, as I mentioned, these skeptics are not about truth or reality at all, but about playing philosophical word games.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 6: The memory malleability argument to dismiss anecdotal evidence.

Stated as: "Memory is malleable and unreliable. The mind often fabricates memories and/or edits them. Therefore, memory is not reliable evidence for paranormal claims."

A similar skeptical tactic to try to further discredit anecdotal evidence (covered above in Argument # 5) is to attack the reliability of people's memory. Skeptics argue that since memory is malleable, then the memory of paranormal experiencers is unreliable and therefore not to be trusted as valid evidence. This is related to the concept of False Memory Syndrome. Skeptics also try to justify it by using Occam's Razor, claiming that inaccurate memory is a more probable and simpler explanation than any paranormal one. However, two significant problems with this argument reveal that is not only weak, but inapplicable as well, making it one of the least convincing of the skeptical arguments.

1) The main problem with this is that although memory isn't perfect and doesn't work like a tape recorder, the majority of what sane people remember IS reliable and can be checked out and verified. (See Argument # 5) This is easily demonstrable. I could make a long list of things I did yesterday, last week, or even last year. And I could also make a long list of events that happened from yesterday to years ago. The vast majority of these things (I would bet over 95 percent of them) could easily be verified by other people, records/receipts, news articles of the events, etc. No one of course remembers every detail of every second of their life, but what we DO remember tends to be accurate and can be verified. This simple fact is severely damaging to the false memory dogma of this argument. Of course, there are bound to be a few details that are fuzzy that I may not remember correctly, but these are addressed in the second point below.

2) Where memory tends to be unreliable the most is in the area involving details that the brain considers too insignificant to remember (which is the category that most things go into such as the colors of the cars you saw on the way to work this morning, number of steps on a staircase, etc.). Thousands of details we perceive everyday which our minds consider useless and insignificant are discarded. Unfortunately for skeptics and debunkers, paranormal experiences don't fit into this category because they tend to be significant, shocking, and revealing. As we all know, significant life-altering events in our lives make the biggest impression in our memory and tend to be remembered immediately with clarity, not years afterward. Since paranormal/psychic experiences belong in this category, this further damages this already weak argument even more. In fact, people describing shocking or traumatic events from long ago tend to say, "It was years ago, but I can still see it as if it were happening right now." These memories are often the same way years later as they were the day they occurred. This means that the memory is consistent and reliable. It's not like I just thought of an event from years ago that made no impression on me back then and suddenly realize upon reflection that it was paranormal! Therefore memories of paranormal events are not likely to be created by memory malleability. Such was demonstrated in my own case when a psychic who sensed from my "vibrations" that there was a tragic period in my life

when I was 9 years old. When a skeptic challenged the reliability of my memory of it, which only occurred a year and a half ago, I easily met his challenge by showing him a post I wrote up about it the day after it occurred, which contained the SAME details that I remember now. (it's ironic these days when science and technology helps us prove skeptics wrong!)

Therefore, based on the two points above, the memory malleability argument is not only too weak to use to dismiss significant paranormal claims but also inadequate and inapplicable as well.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 7: Automatic dismissal of paranormal claims as due to mistake, lying or hallucination

Stated as: "Since paranormal phenomena is impossible, those who claim to have them must be mistaken, lying, or hallucinating."

PseudoSkeptics who can't explain away a paranormal event usually classify witnesses as either mistaken, lying, or hallucinating. This again reflect an emotional and fanatical belief on their part that any paranormal event is impossible. They don't really know that a claimant must fit one of the above categories, they convince themselves of it to keep their mental model paradigms intact. This is further evidenced by the fact that many skeptics will continue to insist on one of these three categories even when such explanations do not fit the data or are far too unlikely. It's another example of where they prefer a false explanation over a paranormal one.

A common fallacy these skeptics make is to assert that those who claim to have paranormal experiences do not consider other mundane explanations for their experience, and instead jump to paranormal conclusions. Well that simply isn't true at all. In almost every story you read or hear about of a paranormal experience, the claimant almost always describes the possible mundane explanations that he/she considered, and how they were ruled out before coming to their unconventional conclusion. It's there in simple plain language, yet somehow skeptics never seem to see this. What skeptics don't understand is, if the possible mundane explanations don't fit the facts or are too improbable to be believed, then they can and should be ruled out.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 8: There is no evidence for any paranormal or psychic phenomena.

PseudoSkeptics are always saying, "There's no evidence for any paranormal or psychic phenomena" no matter how much evidence is shown to them. That's because this statement is a religion to them, not an objective statement. So no matter what evidence you give them, they will always deny it and raise the bar, simply because "there is no evidence" is a fixed belief to them.

So, if you give them stories and experiences, even from credible sources, they will reject it as "anecdotal" and inadmissible as evidence. If you give them scientific studies that show positive results for psi, they will argue that those studies did not have proper controls (since, if they did, they'd only get chance results, so their fixed logic goes). And they will argue that the studies must be replicable. Then when you show them replicated studies (e.g. Ganzfeld), they will raise the bar again and argue it was not replicated enough times (until a debunker disproves it is what they mean), ad infinitum. So no matter how many stories or replicable research studies you cite, it's NEVER enough. There is no clear bar to meet to qualify as "real evidence" to them, because essentially, there is NO EVIDENCE in their mind, thus there is no real criteria to be met. That gives them the license to deny ad infinitum. It's like playing a shady game of three shells with

a con artist. You can never win because the conclusion has already been decided from the get go. That's what makes these Pseudoskeptics dishonest and not what they claim at all.

But the reality is that for some common paranormal phenomenon such as ESP, there is plenty of long standing evidence of both types - anecdotal and scientific. Controlled scientific experiments have yielded positive results for ESP for many years. From the 1930's with JB Rhine, to the current day with Dr. Charles Tart, Dr. Gary Schwartz, Rupert Sheldrake, and many other scientists, positive and consistent results for psi have been found to exist far above chance under controlled conditions. And series of psi experiments that have been replicated for decades known as The Ganzfeld Experiments, Autoganzfeld Experiments and PEAR (Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research) have yielded statistically significant and consistent results above chance as well.

In addition, the anecdotal and experiential evidence is overwhelming. Studies show that at least half the population of the world has had paranormal experiences, and according to the National Science Foundation, "60% of American either AGREE or STRONGLY AGREE that some people either possess psychic abilities or extrasensory perception". That's A LOT, no doubt. Common sense would tell you that if half the people in the world have experienced something, then it's pretty much certain that there's something to it other than fraud, misperception and fantasy, especially since a good number of these experiencers include credible down-to-earth people as well. Likewise, large percentage of people of all types from all walks of life have experienced ghosts too.

So you see, the evidence for such common paranormal phenomena is huge. As Parapsychologist Author Dean Radin has said, the evidence for psi is so solid and robust that if the same quality of evidence existed for something non-paranormal, it would definitely have been accepted as proven. But because the paranormal is considered taboo in the scientific establishment, there is a sort of censorship and knowledge filtration toward it. There is an automatic negative stigma and bias toward it that assumes that only crackpots believe in such things. So any scientist who openly supports the legitimacy of paranormal phenomena seriously jeopardizes their career and image among their colleagues. Thus, most scientists who believe in some paranormal phenomena will not declare it publicly, but become close enthusiasts. Mr. Radin discovered this, as many scientists confided in him their secret unofficial interest and belief that some of the paranormal is real.

Even in regard to UFO's there is plenty of evidence for them, albeit not proof. UFO photos and videos are controversial and vague of course, but many credible eyewitnesses, including Air Force Pilots and Astronauts, have seen them. They've also been tracked on radar doing aerial maneuvers that man-made aircraft could not do. (And as you know, hallucinations do not appear on radar.) In one famous official incident known as the Washington Merry Go Round Incident of 1952, jet fighters were scrambled to intercept UFO's after they had been tracked on radar. Afterward, to quell public panic, the incident was quickly dismissed though never fully explained. Nevertheless, something significant happened to trigger the alarm and scrambling of fighters, and it wasn't "zero evidence" for sure. But if you think that UFO evidence is strictly confined to obscure sightings, think again. The famous Bentwaters UFO Incident that occurred on an American military base in England in 1980 involving two dozen military witnesses, including Colonel Halt, of an up-close UFO sighting, remains an undebunked and compelling case. And after years of extensive investigations and interviews with Alien Abductees by Budd Hopkins and John Mack, who wrote books on the phenomenon, they concluded that there was more to the abduction experience than mere hallucination or sleep paralysis. In addition, public coalitions such as The Disclosure Project have brought forth a large pool of high ranking government, military and intelligence officials and insiders, over 400 currently, who have confessed to personal knowledge of government involvement with UFO's and ET technology, and the cover ups and secrecy surrounding it. See videos of their testimonies at press conferences here:

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2001

UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2010

Now, that's certainly NOT "zero evidence"! To watch some compelling films about UFO's, see James Fox's Out of the Blue and I Know What I Saw which you can see on YouTube.

Nevertheless, pseudoskeptics who claim to only want evidence continue to declare that "there is no evidence" when they get plenty of it from credible sources. Obviously, they are in a state of perpetual denial and cognitive dissonance. They deny and filter out anything that doesn't fit into their materialistic reductionistic view of reality, especially anything that has to do with paranormal or conspiracies, no matter what evidence is presented, even if its documented and scientific. One thing they are they not open to is possibilities. Any possibility that challenges the views of the establishment is simply not possible to them, even if the claims of the establishment itself are not scientific or

contradicted by facts. It doesn't even have to be paranormal, it can be ANYTHING that opposes the official version of events, including conspiracies and lies by corrupt government officials or even the existence of shadow governments (which were acknowledged to exist in the 80's with the Iran Contra Scandal). Thus, their bias and blind faith in authority as dogma is revealed.

Even if a highly credible source with a long history of accuracy suddenly makes a paranormal claim or a claim against an established view, they automatically dismiss it as bunk before even looking into it. If they do look into it, it will not be to learn the truth about it, but to debunk it. They will even deny evidence from scientific experiments as well. All the while, they tout, "Show me the evidence. Where's the evidence?" Yet when they are shown the evidence, they merely dismiss it or ignore it, acting as though they heard nothing, then go back to repeating that there's no evidence. I've seen them do this for years, in the media, on websites, in forum discussions, and on my own mailing list. It's as though they were deaf and totally belief oriented, seeing only what they want to see.

The problem for pseudoskeptics is that their denial and cognitive dissonance does NOT erase the evidence from reality. It may erase it from their own minds, but it does not erase the evidence itself. Thus, it can be said that they are deluded and do not face up to reality.

Some examples of pseudoskeptics' denial of evidence and cognitive dissonance:

If a psychic or medium gets an amazing hit, either something highly unusual and specific that doesn't apply to everyone or a deep dark secret about you that no one knows, which could NOT have been due to cold reading or guessing, then it means nothing to the pseudoskeptics, who will say that it must have been a lucky guess, or due to fraud or your own faulty memory, because no one has psychic abilities.

If witnesses experience a ghost, they must have been hallucinating, have an active imagination, or lying. Ghosts don't exist, so it must have been something else.

If people see UFO's, including trained Air Force Pilots and Astronauts, then they must have misidentified natural phenomenon, because alien ships don't exist, at least not near Earth. And this is so even if radar picked up objects performing maneuvers impossible for man-made aircraft.

If psychic abilities are demonstrated under controlled conditions (e.g. PEAR, Ganzfeld, SRI), then there must have been flaws in the protocols or lack of controls, because psychic abilities are not possible. PseudoSkeptics then demand repeatability and peer

review. But when they get that, they then ask for more repeatability, from skeptical scientists as well. The bar is continually raised until a skeptical scientist finds or imagines any flaw in the experiments and declares them debunked. Only then are they satisfied. Clearly, they only want a particular result (only chance results), not the truth. If it doesn't get debunked, then they accuse the experimentors of improper controls or deceit, as Randi is infamous for doing.

They claim that no psi study that shows positive results has ever been published in credible scientific journals. Yet when they are shown citations that they have, they simply become deaf and ignore them. Then they have the nerve to simply repeat their lie again, as if they never even heard you! This is very infuriating and dishonest. If a resuscitated patient has an NDE or OBE where he/she sees details that they could not have known about, then it must have been lucky guesses or unconscious memories, because there is no soul that can leave the body..

Even if a non-paranormal claim simply challenges the official story, it is denied and dismissed. For example, all vast the evidence in the JFK Assassination pointing to more than one gunman is automatically dismissed and denied, no matter how strong it is, despite the fact that the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded back in the late 70's that "President Kennedy was probably killed as a result of a conspiracy."

Yet when some author publishes a book supporting the lone assassin theory that distorts the facts, lies and obfuscates the issues, the skeptics are quick to praise it without any objective open review, for it supports their view.

Likewise, when thermite/thermate and explosive residues are found in the World Trade Center dust from 9/11 by scientists with scientific means, the skeptics simply ignore it, because it goes against the official 9/11 story. Or they look for ways to explain it away, using even the most improbable assumptions. Or when key witnesses at Ground Zero such as William Rodriguez testify that they heard huge booming explosions coming from the BASEMENT level of the World Trade Center Towers, and occurred BEFORE the planes hit the towers, totally contradicting the official story, the skeptics completely ignore and censor it out of their heads. In fact, all the compelling evidence presented by AE911Truth.org on their site and videos that makes sense to open-minded people is completely ignored and dismissed because simply put, if it contradicts the official version, then it must be false. That is NOT objectivity or open minded investigation at all, period, but blind-fanaticism.

Here is an interesting example of denial of evidence. I found this blog which misrepresented what SCEPCOP is about, labeling it "kooky" as well. So when I tried to clear up her misunderstanding, she replied that she just wanted to see evidence, that's all, insinuating that no one so far had been able to give her any evidence for any paranormal or psychic phenomena. She even wrote in her blog, "If SCEPCOP wants to be taken seriously, all they need to do is present some evidence for the paranormal." This requirement was a sinch, so to get her informed me and other SCEPCOP folks sent her a host of links, resources, books and videos with the evidence she asked for. In response she became overwhelmed and went to the JREF forum to ask how she can

dismiss so much evidence being directed at her, thus demonstrating that her true agenda was not that of an open minded truth seeker, but of confirmation bias, seeking only that which supported her belief, or disbelief, in anything paranormal, regardless of facts or evidence. That was a bit deceptive of course, but it's typical behavior of pseudoskeptics to claim one thing and do another.

Here are her exact words on the JREF forum, revealing her true agenda and mindset:

<http://forums.randi.org/showpost.php?p=4977768&postcount=87>

"Phew I'm glad there's a thread about this here! I have a blog and I made a post about SCEPCOP awhile back...they recently found it and a bunch of them have started making massive comments on it, so many LINKS!!! They even made a thread about me on their forum, which I was stupid enough to join...it's exhausting reading the threads there so I have no desire to go back.

Maybe you guys could help me out with something...they've been giving me all of this "evidence" and recommending books etc. but I have no inclination to read it. They've said that I'm not being skeptical because I haven't looked at their stuff and because I won't read the books...really it's because it bores me...but they say in order to be truly skeptical or whatever I have to look at everything, and I know that's not true, it's ridiculous that they would expect that of me, but how can I respond to this???"

She later admitted that she had no interest in examining the evidence after all, and so didn't feel like investing the time in it. So you might be wondering, why did she ask for evidence then if she wasn't interested in it? That makes no sense of course, is illogical and does not compute. But then again, pseudoskeptics are not about logic or making sense, but about faith based disbelief and fanaticism.

Afterlife researcher Dr. Victor Zammit, a member of SCEPCOP, explains the psychology behind the pseudoskeptics' cognitive dissonance:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/fundingskeptics.html>

"1. Psychology: Rationalization through Cognitive Dissonance

Let's borrow a page from traditional psychology. When a skeptic receives information - say, scientific proof for the afterlife - which is fundamentally inconsistent with his or her entrenched cherished beliefs, the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her beliefs to reduce and to offset the intense biological, emotional and mental anxiety. The intense anxiety is created by the information that the afterlife exists.

The skeptic's mind tries to resist and reject this new information (even if the information is the absolute truth) - hence the cognitive (the mind) 'dissonance' - between the new information - (i.e., the positive evidence for the afterlife) and the skeptic's own personal beliefs that the afterlife cannot exist.

Closed-minded skepticism is extremely difficult to shift because his/her skepticism is 'electrically wired' into the skeptic's neurological, psychological, intellectual and emotional belief system. Thus with absolute certainty, this skeptic inexorably loses all sense of empirical equanimity.

Then the skeptic tries to rationalize his/her own personal beliefs and will try to rubbish, denigrate, dismiss and destroy the new information (including scientific proof of some psychic phenomenon) which gives the skeptic a lot of intense anxiety. This skeptic cannot allow his lifelong deeply cherished beliefs against an afterlife to be proved wrong, to be totally incorrect. So this skeptic will use every trick, every bit of energy and every means to try to rationalize i.e., to reduce cognitive dissonance. She will defend her skepticism and ridicule and viciously attack any positive evidence for the afterlife - which is causing the anxiety to the skeptic. I repeat, all sense of scientific objectivity will be lost."

Update September 2009: Skeptic Richard Wiseman, a die hard critic of psychic phenomena, has finally conceded that the case for remote viewing and ESP has been proven by normal scientific standards! For more info, see these blog entries:

<http://deanradin.blogspot.com/2009/09/skeptic-agrees-that-remote-viewing-is.html>

<http://subversivethinking.blogspot.com/2010/04/richard-wiseman-evidence-for-esp-meets.html>

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 9: Science is the only reliable method.

Stated as: "The only reliable way to know about anything is through the scientific method. All other methods are unreliable."

This statement is usually made by skeptics who glorify and worship science as their God, even though they would never put it in those terms due to the connotations of them.

1) First, this is an absolutist statement since there is not just one single way to know everything. Other ways of knowing things include direct observation, personal experience, textbooks and articles, and advice from those who are wiser and more experienced than us. There are countless real things I can experience that don't need to be proved by the scientific method. Even mundane examples can demonstrate that. For instance, I can see rainbows by direct observation even though I can't bring them back to scientists, though they can see them too if they chose to go look. I can learn parenting through the experience of being a parent, and swimming by the experience of going into the water. Marketers and businesses learn the marketability of their products through surveys. We can also learn valuable things from wiser and more experienced people too, despite the fact that we didn't use any scientific method to check them out. In addition, I can't prove where I was yesterday either with the scientific method, but that doesn't mean that any claim of where I was yesterday is false. Neither can I prove what I dreamed last night with the scientific method either, but that doesn't mean that I don't know what I dreamed about. Likewise, if Acupuncture or some alternative medicine technique works for me, then I know that it works for me regardless of whether it's proven by the scientific method or not. Not everything has to be official for it to be true. (See rebuttal to Argument # 1 for more on that.) The scientific method is a tool for testing hypothesis and finding out things, not for defending one's own paradigms.

2) Second, since successful psi results have been achieved in tests conducted under the scientific method, (See Argument # 17 and Argument # 18) it can be said that evidence for psi has been gained from the scientific method anyway. Not surprisingly though, skeptics tend to only accept results done with the scientific method that show the results they want, which is no psi results and only chance results.

3) Third, things don't have to be proven by science in order to be true. (as explained

in Argument # 1) Many things were true and real before science discovered or proved them. Though the converse of this is also true, why should we consider the skeptic's subjective dismissal as being more reliable than one's direct experience? Besides, without direct experience, how would we know anything at all? Greg Stone from my discussion list, put it very well in his post:

"But balanced against science's supposed lack of evidence one finds the DIRECT EXPERIENCE of those who report. And the reports are consistent and voluminous. Thus, while science, according to Kurtz, cannot weigh in definitively on either side of the equation, the DIRECT EXPERIENCES are a fact. And, as everyone knows, we do not need to check with science to confirm all the aspects of our daily lives...we did not need to wait for science to properly define and experiment with the atom before we could manipulate things made up of atoms.

Experience, direct knowledge, is of a higher order of understanding than mere subjective speculation without experience. If one were to accept your argument that experience is intrinsically invalid as a way of knowing, then you undermine your entire position as you have nothing else upon which to base ANYTHING. Thus, we see the weakness of a position that replaces firsthand knowledge, firsthand experience with the SPECULATION of someone who has no experience.

Which one does the real scientist consider more valid... the report of a direct experience (make that volumes of consistent reports) OR the musings of someone with NO experience, only their speculation?"

Where these closed-minded skeptics make the mistake is in seeking proof from scientific experiments (which they invalidate anyway when they don't get the results they want) rather than from direct experience, which is the ultimate true validation. The mystic Faith Rada, my spiritual advisor and mentor, sums this up well:

"The fact is your post MAY be absolutely correct and valid BUT it COULD also be just someone posting "lies and foolishness" as far as a pseudo/skeptic is concerned." What constitutes Proof? Actually it is a personal thing and not a SET thing. It is THAT POINT at which something is able to be accepted as REAL. Mundane words do not hold the power to do that .. one NEEDS Direct experience. And posting an article that May well be valid is STILL not a PROOF when the viewer

demands Personal experience. And they have every right to. As the dictionary post below.. it can be a PROCESS. Add to this the MAJOR problem that these pseudo/skeptics really do not WANT proof.. because it would destroy their perspective and you end up with an impasse. Remember that saying? A person convinced against his will... is of the same opinion still. IT's EGO at work.

PROOF ~

□ Etymology: Middle English, alteration of preove, from Old French preuve, from Late Latin proba, from Latin probare to prove -- more at PROVE

□ 1 a : the cogency of evidence that compels acceptance by the mind of a truth or a fact
b : the process or an instance of establishing the validity of a statement especially by derivation from other statements in accordance with principles of reasoning

2 obsolete : EXPERIENCE

3 : something that induces certainty or establishes validity

Obviously anyone can type up ANY statement, make ANY claim of validity and witnesses and circumstances that they want.. Even when we investigate there are judgments that need to be made. Is this person trustworthy? Certainly lab. scientists working on major projects HAVE falsified test results. People.. GASP! LIE all the time. OR they may honestly misinterpret things, but UNLESS YOU are directly involved.. as in FIRST HAND ... then it must remain 'here say'. This does not mean it is useless.. BUT it is certainly not living PROOF either. I was and still am a "skeptic" .. in the sense that with no direct proof I will not accept. I have had The Direct proof.. of things within the mundane world and also Transcendent Proof of Pure Consciousness. The latter is "REAL" proof since it makes you ONE WITH the actual event ... eliminating the need for the dualistic mind to pass judgment on what is being "experienced" since it lies BEYOND the mind's ability to think on.... but that is another subject so forget that for now.

It was not until I had a number of "remote" viewing myself that I had the proof I needed. Plus I did not depend on my own mind..since the finite mind canNOT be trusted.

There were at times people I could share with that were able to validate what I saw. They GOT proof since they were an active part of it the event. .. but if I were to write about it today what would the point BE? It is certainly not PROOF...A curiosity to consider for those open enough to do so, which is great, but certainly NOT proof.

So.. proof for those involved directly but NOT for those who read about it after the fact .. See what I mean?

Such sights as you post ARE useful. It is a good place to start looking... and that can allow us to be more open to our own necessary Direct and validated Experiences. I say validated experiences because the mind IS a tricky place. People do see what they WANT to see and do not see what they do NOT want to see. What is even meant by real? That is a VERY good question.

One needs to validate for ones self... whatever that takes. Everyone GETS to know ONLY when it is their time to know.. to expand into their full awareness. Not everyone is ready. Knowing that we are consciousness FIRST and physical body second has a LOT of ramifications for the psyche... something else to contemplate. Peace, Faith”

Now I don't dispute that science is an effective way of collecting knowledge, testing theories, or discovering how things work. The point is that it is not the ONLY way. And since science has not disproved the existence of God, life after death, spirits, or psi, then there is no point in skeptics trying to use science to dismiss those things. Furthermore, the best method of knowing things also depend on the kind of knowledge one is attempting to acquire. There are many issues and problems everyday for which empiricism is impractical or impossible. We make many rational daily decisions both individually and as a society that are based on no empirical observations. Sometimes common sense and direct observation are all that are required.

Dean Radin points out in the beginning of his book *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*, that new scientific discoveries tend to go through stages. He writes: (page 1)

“In science, the acceptance of new ideas follows a predictable, four-stage sequence. In Stage 1, skeptic confidently proclaim that the idea is impossible because it violates the Laws of Science. This stage can last for years or for centuries, depending on how much the idea challenges conventional wisdom. In Stage 2, skeptics reluctantly concede that the idea is possible but that it is not very interesting and the claimed effects are extremely weak. Stage 3 begins when the mainstream realizes not only

that the idea is important but that its effects are much stronger and more pervasive than previously imagined. Stage 4 is achieved when the same critics who previously disavowed any interest in the idea being to proclaim that they thought of it first. Eventually, no one remembers that the idea was once considered a dangerous heresy.

The idea discussed in this book is in the midst of the most important and the most difficult of the four transitions - from Stage 1 into Stage 2."

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 10: Paranormal phenomena aren't possible because they contradict known laws of science.

First of all, natural laws as we define them are based on our interpretation of empirical testing and observation. Therefore, they are subject to constant change as new discoveries are found which challenge or contradict our models. Throughout history, we have constantly updated and expanded our understanding of the laws of how the universe works. In the past, it was said that things like heavier than air flight and going to the moon were impossibilities. Skeptics of those things were proven wrong of course. At one time, according to the law of aerodynamics, a hummingbird shouldn't be able to hover, yet it did, so we had to figure out why and revise our laws of aerodynamics. When Albert Einstein discovered that light travels at a constant speed (e.g. if you're traveling in a car and shine a flashlight forward, the car's speed is not added to the light's speed), and formulated his theory of relativity (time slows down as you go faster), and postulated that gravity involves distortion of space, all these things contradicted the Newtonian laws of physics at the time, yet they were eventually validated. As of now, special relativity and quantum mechanics are at odds with each other, and physicists are seeking a grand unified theory to unite them both. As history has shown, we constantly update and expand our laws of physics to fit the data, not deny the data and new discoveries just to protect our beliefs.

In fact, new discoveries in quantum physics each year are shattering the materialistic reductionist view we had of the universe, making psychic phenomena and other dimensions more plausible. These include the non-locality (meaning distance and space don't exist) of twin particles (discovered by Alan Aspect in 1982), string theories that postulate several other dimensions beside our own, the discovery that particles behave differently when observed (making psychokinesis more probable), etc. (See Fred Alan Wolfe's *Taking the Quantum Leap* and *The Spiritual Universe*) Each new discovery seems proves the skeptics wrong and moves us further from their views and closer to metaphysical paradigms. This is obviously not a good sign for their case. It appears that the skeptic camp is a sinking ship that one should get off to avoid embarrassment. Just the discovery alone in quantum physics that all matter is a form of vibrating energy makes paranormal and psychic phenomena much more plausible and understandable.

Finally, good theories try to unify the data. As Ron Pearson notes in his article *Theoretical Physics Back Survival*:

“Theories make sense of the experiments and show how apparently unrelated phenomena are aspects of the same thing. Good theories provide unifications. For example, magnetism and electricity were separate fields when science was in its infancy. As understanding grew it was found that magnetic effects could be produced by electric currents and the converse also applied. Now we speak of electromagnetism as a single force; one of the four forces of nature. Theoretical physicists hope ultimately to join these by a unified field theory arising from a single 'superforce'.”

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 11: Unexplainable does not mean inexplicable.

This phrase is emphasized by arch skeptic Michael Shermer, author of *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time*. This argument means that just because something is unexplainable does not mean that paranormal forces must have been involved, only that we haven't found the explanation for it yet. However, skeptic who use this should also remember that the following converses are true as well:

- 1) Just because something happens that they think isn't possible doesn't mean that it didn't happen. To do so would be to deny reality.
- 2) Just because something happens that they think isn't possible doesn't mean that it must be due to misperception, fraud, or hallucination.
- 3) Just because a natural explanation hasn't been found for something unexplainable doesn't mean that only a natural explanation could exist.
- 4) If a natural explanation doesn't explain all the facts, that doesn't mean that you should insist on it anyway just to protect your belief system.

Take the following example. In the reincarnation cases investigated by Dr. Ian Stevenson in his book *Twenty cases suggestive of reincarnation*, none of the natural explanations account for the data and facts of the cases, such as babies and children having accurate detailed memories of their past lives which couldn't have been obtained in their environment, but are later verified to be true. Dr. Stevenson concludes that the reincarnation hypothesis best fits the data he personally investigated. Though the skeptic is free to insist that a natural explanation must be the culprit anyway, (and often does) he does so by flatly denying the four converse rules above. Would Shermer approve of that, I wonder? (For more on the reincarnation phenomena, check out *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*)

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 12: Skeptics don't have beliefs. They make assessments based on evidence.

Some skeptics on the extreme end even go so far as to claim that unlike the rest of the world, they don't have "beliefs" but reasoned judgments based on pure evidence alone. Not all skeptics claim to be immune to beliefs, but there are some that do. This is plain silly though, because statements of belief can be found in almost anything someone says. We all do things and say things based on assumptions we have, which are formed in part based on beliefs. These assumptions are sometimes in the line of beliefs because they are not always based on hard evidence, but our world views, predisposition, and natural tendencies. Beliefs are especially found in the skeptical arguments discussed so far, as most of the skeptical arguments in this book are clear statements of a priori belief, such as "It is irrational to believe anything that hasn't been proven" (Argument # 1) and "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." (Argument # 2) Further common skeptical beliefs include "Believers in the paranormal are irrational", "Psi is improbable", "Psychics and mediums prey on the gullible" and "Psi experiments show no better than chance results when proper controls are put into place".

Though skeptics will claim that their views are based on the evidence that they've examined, they rarely apply their skepticism to their own beliefs, which any true skeptic would do. Furthermore, upon close scrutiny it's obvious that they prefer false explanations to paranormal ones, resort to character assassinations, and ignore data that doesn't fit their hypotheses. Strange behavior for people who don't have beliefs! Rather, I think that skeptics are using this "I don't have beliefs" argument to excuse themselves from having to defend their views, while shifting the burden to believers and paranormalists.

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Review

"This sparkling book romps over the range of science and anti-science." —Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*

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About the Author

Michael Shermer is the author of *The Believing Brain*, *Why People Believe Weird Things*, *The Science of Good and Evil*, *The Mind Of The Market*, *Why Darwin Matters*, *Science Friction*, *How We Believe* and other books on the evolution of human beliefs and behavior. He is the founding publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, the editor of *Skeptic.com*, a monthly columnist for *Scientific American*, and an adjunct professor at Claremont Graduate University. He lives in Southern California.

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Product details

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Publication date : September 1, 2002

Edition : Revised & enlarged

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Michael Shermer

Dr. Michael Shermer is the Founding Publisher of Skeptic magazine, the host of the Science Salon Podcast, and a Presidential Fellow at Chapman University where he teaches Skepticism 101. For 18 years he was a monthly columnist for Scientific American. He is the author of New York Times bestsellers *Why People Believe Weird Things* and *The Believing Brain*, *Why Darwin Matters*, *The Science of Good and Evil*, *The Moral Arc*, and *Heavens on Earth*. His new book is *Giving the Devil His Due: Reflections of a Scientific Humanist*.

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Top reviews from the United States

Mike Smith

5.0 out of 5 stars A Fearsome Weapon Against Lazy Thinking

Reviewed in the United States on December 9, 2007

Format: PaperbackVerified Purchase

Michael Shermer's "Why People Believe Weird Things" is a terrific book. Wow.

I cannot emphasize enough what an enjoyable read this book is for anybody tired of being surrounded by people who view the world as some sort of unsolvable supernatural puzzle. Because the world isn't!

Sure, we can't explain the entire world. If we could, we wouldn't need science or reason or philosophy or psychology or logic or anything--if we could, we could just recite the same dogmas and platitudes of earlier generations and never have to bother thinking about anything beyond how things make us feel.

...Like a lot of people do.

This book systematically moves through a large number of the more persistent myths of our age--from Biblical creationism, to Holocaust denial, to psychic detectives--and while it spends quite a bit of time exploring the strangeness and the details of such ideas, it also spends quite a bit exploring why such beliefs are ultimately false, why people choose to believe such things, and how we can avoid such errors in our own thoughts.

Reading it, I constantly found myself wanting to force it onto everyone I talked with, whether they would agree with me about it or not. This book is a weapon against lazy thinking--particularly its chapter, "How Thinking Goes Wrong: Twenty-five Fallacies that Lead Us to Believe Weird Things"--a chapter that I wouldn't mind seeing expanded into an entire book of its own--and I really could not recommend it more highly.

Most of the book originally appeared as essays in "Skeptic" magazine, so it may feel a bit episodic at points--but holy cow, what great episodes! Also, there's a huge section in the middle dedicated to Holocaust denial--perhaps more than the subject warrants, as arguing down people who believe the Holocaust never happened is not all that difficult. All right, all right, all right already, the sky is blue, humans need water, you got me. (Shermer wrote an entire book about Holocaust denial, "Denying History," so it's obviously an important topic to him, and he does make it interesting.) Also, some of the slower pieces seem to have been saved for the end, and the book does feel a bit uneven at times, but overall, I just felt absolutely gleeful reading this.

The famous alien autopsy video, TV psychics, Edgar Cayce, the 1980s Satanic Panic, even the cult of writer Ayn Rand--all are not safe here, and the book is worth its cost just for the many brilliant parallels it draws between Creationism and Holocaust Denial.

There is just so much nonsense out there threatening to indoctrinate our children, dictate our lives, and make us afraid, that this is just nothing but refreshing; this exudes truth and reason; this should be read by everyone, and I do mean everyone.

Read it, read it, read it--and be enlightened.

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Christian Orlic

4.0 out of 5 stars Good book about weird ideas and why people believe them

Reviewed in the United States on April 27, 2013

Format: PaperbackVerified Purchase

This is an interesting book where Shermer explores why people believe weird things by which he means things that once considered seemed odd or strange. The book is divided into five parts. which deal with science and skepticism, pseudoscience and superstition, evolution and creationism, history and pseudohistory, and hope springs eternal. Shermer deals with a number of topics. The book begins with some anecdotes and an attempt to define skepticism. By skeptic, Shermer tells readers he means, "one who questions the validity of a particular claim by calling for evidence to prove or disprove it" (17) and emphasizes that this ought to be a self correcting approach to the positions one holds. Chapter 2 discusses some of the differences between science and pseudoscience and briefly explores the internalist v. externalist debate in the historiography of science. Shermer suggests that even though scientific principles only exist in people's mind; the actual phenomena they describe exist outside of us.; "all description is in the mind, but scientific laws describe repeating natural phenomena while pseudoscientific claims are idiosyncratic. Further, he contends, that science, at least on average, moves forward due its cumulative nature while recognize that "there is no question that science is heavily influenced by the culture in which it is embedded, and that scientists may all share a common bias that leads them to think a certain way about nature" (41). Chapter 3 discusses ways in which thinkers commonly make mistakes (theory influences observations, observer changes the observed, equipment constructs results, anecdotal thinking, the use of scientific language can mislead, bold statements, heresy, rumors, where the burden of proof lies, after the fact reasoning, coincidence, etc). Part II begins with a Chapter on Deviations where Shermer briefly explores how deviations from the mean will statistically occur when experiments are run. Chapter 5 is about near death experiences and explores the phenomena concluding that it is likely the result of chemical interactions in the brain when people are close to dying. Chapter 6 is about alien abductions; here Shermer explores, recovered (read implanted) memories. He further wonders why aliens never actually give important information. Lastly, Shermer points out that these fantasies which human experience are culturally affected: "humans are experiencing fantasies and interpreting them in the social context of their age and culture" (98). Chapter 7 is about epidemics of accusations - where he discusses witch crazes, crazes about satanic abuse cults, and so forth. In chapter 7 he describes how individuals can 'acquire' memories and come to belief that they did things they did not do. Chapter 8 is about the cult of Ayn Rand, which Shermer (who once considered himself an Objectivist), calls "the unlikeliest cult" (114). This chapter offers a brief history of Rand and her work. Rand's philosophy is supposedly based on reason and argues that an objective reality exists which can be understood by reason, thus one must be self-interested and support capitalism. Strangely, and unlike, science, Objectivism is not self-correcting, once something is established it is taken as truth. Shermer claims that the "great flaw in her philosophy is that morals can be held to some absolute standard or criteria" (123). Part III begins with chapter 9 on the question of origins. Chapter 10 is about confronting creationists. Chapter 11 is about a supreme court case about creationism and evolution. Part 4 is about history and pseudohistory. This part deals mostly with holocaust denialism. Chapter 15 looks at race, variation and the like. Part 5, begins with Chapter

15 and attempts by scientists to find evidence to support some of their metaphysical conceptions (Tipler and Christianity). Chapter 17 is why people believe weird things - because of immediate gratification, simplicity and morality/meaning Shermer suggests. In Chapt 18 Shermer explores why smart people believe weird things (they are better at rationalizing beliefs they reached without evidence)

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Steve H.

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Reviewed in the United States on November 21, 2025

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Rodney J. Szasz

3.0 out of 5 stars A GOOD READ BUT NOT THE BEST OF ITS GENRE

Reviewed in the United States on September 19, 2002

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A Good Book with a lot of interesting details on creationists, cult and UFO believers and generally anyone that never learned how to think critically.

There is in my opinion some interesting tidbits that you normally do not run into in this kind of book --- the section on the disease of Holocaust denial and Ayn Rand believers (certainly not a disease, but a little disturbing nonetheless) are of particular note.

Shermer concentrates on the fallacies and crooked thinking inherent in the things that do not make the simple test of being empirical or subject to change given new data (the most basic requirements for any logical and scientific view of the world).

Richard Dawkins does a far better job of debunking creationism. Sagan, the man who predicated his whole life on the study of the possibility of extraterrestrial life, does a better job in disclaiming any assumed probability that we have any shred of evidence through the ages for any rational belief in UFOs or massive world conspiracy theories.

The organization of the book is also a little haphazard. In that sense it can still be highly entertaining by reading a chapter at a time and then returning to it from time to time.

All in all a very good effort and one that should be lauded when everywhere the forces of irrationalism and intolerance are on the rise.

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Marco

5.0 out of 5 stars Excelente libro

Reviewed in Spain on January 2, 2020

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serafeim I.

5.0 out of 5 stars Bon livre à lire

Reviewed in France on May 26, 2020

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Bon livre à lire

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S. Snipes

3.0 out of 5 stars 3.5

Reviewed in Italy on July 17, 2014

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é un po' datato, essendo un libro del 2002, ma poiché tratta soprattutto di eventi storici non è un problema. Micheal Shermer è un buon divulgatore, presidente della società degli scettici. Spiega bene varie trappole del "senso comune" e fallacie del pensiero umano, affrontando varie aree di credenze false, molti ancora attuali.

Report

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batman

5.0 out of 5 stars Well worth the read

Reviewed in Canada on March 3, 2016

Format: HardcoverVerified Purchase

Michael Shermer is one of the most interesting writers I have read in recent memory. I would recommend Michael Shermer to anybody who wants to get to the heart of the matter. Unfortunately this book is a bit of a slog and could have done with some reduction. Most interesting was the author's account of his own alien abduction. (The abduction was the result of total exhaustion and lack of sleep and was carried out by his support crew during a cross country road race.)

Report

Circlemaker

5.0 out of 5 stars Five Stars

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on August 1, 2016

Verified Purchase

Excellent delve into psychology behind pseudo science and the paranormal

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 12: Skeptics don't have beliefs. They make assessments based on evidence.

Some skeptics on the extreme end even go so far as to claim that unlike the rest of the world, they don't have "beliefs" but reasoned judgments based on pure evidence alone. Not all skeptics claim to be immune to beliefs, but there are some that do. This is plain silly though, because statements of belief can be found in almost anything someone says. We all do things and say things based on assumptions we have, which are

formed in part based on beliefs. These assumptions are sometimes in the line of beliefs because they are not always based on hard evidence, but our world views, predisposition, and natural tendencies. Beliefs are especially found in the skeptical arguments discussed so far, as most of the skeptical arguments in this book are clear statements of a priori belief, such as “It is irrational to believe anything that hasn’t been proven” (Argument # 1) and “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.” (Argument # 2) Further common skeptical beliefs include “Believers in the paranormal are irrational”, “Psi is improbable”, “Psychics and mediums prey on the gullible” and “Psi experiments show no better than chance results when proper controls are put into place”.

Though skeptics will claim that their views are based on the evidence that they’ve examined, they rarely apply their skepticism to their own beliefs, which any true skeptic would do. Furthermore, upon close scrutiny it’s obvious that they prefer false explanations to paranormal ones, resort to character assassinations, and ignore data that doesn’t fit their hypotheses. Strange behavior for people who don’t have beliefs! Rather, I think that skeptics are using this “I don’t have beliefs” argument to excuse themselves from having to defend their views, while shifting the burden to believers and paranormalists.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 13: Skepticism is not cynicism. It is a method of rational inquiry.

This statement is often found in introductions or FAQ's sections of skeptical websites and books. Here is an example from the website of The Skeptics Society:

"What does it mean to be a skeptic? Some people believe that skepticism is rejection of new ideas, or worse, they confuse "skeptic" with "cynic" and think that skeptics are a bunch of grumpy curmudgeons unwilling to accept any claim that challenges the status quo. This is wrong. Skepticism is a provisional approach to claims. It is the application of reason to any and all ideas-no sacred cows allowed. In other words, skepticism is a method, not a position."

What these skeptics don't understand is that people in general don't have misconceptions about skepticism as a concept, nor do they have any problem with it. The cynicism that people see in so called "skepticism" is not due to their misunderstanding of the word itself, but due to the cynical BEHAVIORS and ACTIONS of the PEOPLE who call themselves skeptics but are in fact pseudoskeptics who fit the list of criteria here. These people do not inquire, but seek to discredit and debunk anything that lies outside of the establishment paradigm, including all paranormal and psychic phenomena. Yet never once do these pseudoskeptics use any skepticism on anything that comes from the establishment.

According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, a skeptic is:

"One who is yet undecided as to what is true; one who is looking or inquiring for what is

true; an inquirer after facts or reasons."

Pyrrho, the founder of "Skepticism", intended for it to be about open inquiry and suspension of judgment.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skeptic>

"In classical philosophy, skepticism refers to the teachings and the traits of the 'Skeptikoi', a school of philosophers of whom it was said that they 'asserted nothing but only opined.' (Liddell and Scott) In this sense, philosophical skepticism, or Pyrrhonism, is the philosophical position that one should suspend judgment in investigations.[1]"

But rather than inquiring, or asking questions to try to understand something, they seek to debunk, discredit and ridicule anything that doesn't fit into their belief system. And rather than suspending judgment, they make accusations of fraud and delusion of all paranormal claimants. Hence, we call them pseudoskeptics (a term coined by the late Marcello Truzzi) for their actions and behaviors are the complete antithesis of what skepticism truly means.

When pseudoskeptics make cynical arguments such as those presented in this book, they portray to others a cynical closed method of thinking, dismissing anything that they don't understand or consider possible. That's where this impression comes from. Cynics who masquerade behind science and skepticism often reveal their cynicism through their words, thinking methodologies, closed system of beliefs, and dogmatic assertions. The six common flawed tactics described in the introduction of this book are the kind of things that give others the impression of cynicism. This is why even some of the well known skeptics and leaders of organized skeptic groups are perceived as cynics, including James Randi (the famous magician, author, debunker, and nemesis of Uri Geller), Michael Shermer (editor of Skeptic magazine), Joe Nickell (one of the leaders of CSICOP), Martin Gardner (psychic debunker), Susan Blackmore (University of London Psychology Professor and proponent of the Dying Brain Hypothesis of NDE's), etc. These people use closed ways of thinking to dismiss data that don't fit into their hypotheses, which is prevalent from statements made in their articles/books. Therefore, these closed-minded skeptics are the ones that have the misconception of mistaking their cynicism with true skepticism.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 14: Believers in the paranormal are thinking in primitive, irrational and childish ways.

This statement is often made by the more extreme and opinionated type of skeptic. Fortunately, many skeptic groups have realized the extremity and folly of these type of statements and have stopped making them in public. The fact is, many who hold spiritual beliefs or metaphysical views came to them after researching all the data and examining the different explanations, making informed conclusions.

Nevertheless, it can also be argued that closed-minded skeptics who are out to debunk everything paranormal are thinking in irrational and uninformed ways because they simply refuse to consider the data that support strong paranormal phenomena cases, but instead dismiss it on a priori grounds. If they are not up to date on the evidence, then they are the ones who are acting uninformed. How can one be truly informed if they only wish to look at the data that support their views? Rationalizing away facts to defend one's paradigm is not an example of rational thinking.

Furthermore, people who hold paranormal or other non-empirical beliefs may simply be expressing a cultural, personal or spiritual view, and nothing more. This does not mean they are less intelligent, more irrational or childish than non-believers of the paranormal. In fact, these people are usually capable of applying rational and intelligent thought to a wide variety of everyday situations when it matters, and no doubt do this effectively and rationally.

We have to remember that basically, it is simply our a-priori beliefs that affect our acceptance of the data for paranormal phenomena. Closed-minded skeptics and debunkers know going into an investigation that there is a natural explanation, and are firmly committed to finding it. The problem is that it can (and has in some cases) lead to incorrect or premature conclusions. It also doesn't do much for skepticism's reputation when a researcher goes in (falsely, and obviously so) proclaiming neutrality when the reality is otherwise. Why not just be honest and say "I don't believe it. It is possible to convince me, but I don't think that is going to happen because in my experience, the world doesn't work that way."?

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 15: Skeptics are defending science and reason from a rising tide of irrationality.

This phrase has often been used in articles and websites of skeptical organizations and magazines, including CSICOP's Skeptical Inquirer and others. Fortunately, this phrase is now critiqued by skeptics themselves, and used less. Michael Sofka of ISUNY and author of the article Myths of Skepticism points out that CSICOP often uses it in their fundraising requests. Folklorist Stephanie Hall comments on this in her article Folklore and the Rise of Moderation Among Organized Skeptics:

"Another change advocated by many Skeptics is in the choice of language used to represent skepticism to others. For instance, a phrase that has commonly appeared in articles by Skeptics and in statements in the brochures or Web sites of skeptic groups was an expression of concern about "the rising tide of irrationality." But although this phrase became an identity marker demonstrating alliance with organized skepticism and a statement of shared concern, it has increasingly been criticized by Skeptics themselves. At the NCAS Millennial Madness workshop in May 1999, Chip Denman critiqued this phrase as, perhaps, skepticism's own bit of Millennialism, asking questions such as, "What do we mean by irrationality? How is it measured? How do we know it is rising?" It seems that this phrase, as a marker of skeptical identity, may be going out of fashion.

These events are an indication to me as a researcher that Skepticism is going through changes as it grows, as we might expect in any social movement, and that local groups are beginning to discover the things they have in common. Perhaps because the movement has steadily grown and this may inspire confidence and stability, Skeptics also seem increasingly willing to critique themselves and express strong views on the ways they do and do not want skepticism to be presented to the public. This self-analysis is, of course, a good thing, for any rational endeavor should be willing to critique itself."

Chip Denman, quoted above by Hall, makes a good point. The statement fails to define what is considered to be irrational. Most likely, what they mean by irrational is anything others believe in that doesn't fit their world view or hasn't been proven their way. Therefore, this is more a statement of bias and faith, rather than fact. If by irrational they mean unproven, then this is false too as there is strong evidence for many paranormal and psychic phenomena (See Argument # 1)

In fact, there does not seem to be any evidence of an increase in irrationality or superstition. I would challenge any skeptic to show me a mass poll where a high percentage of people admit literally that they believe in "superstition and irrationality". There probably aren't any, because most people don't label their beliefs as superstition or irrationality. It is the skeptics who label paranormal beliefs as such. That's an important thing to remember. Even the polls published over the years in Skeptical Inquirer indicate at most a shift in emphasis as one belief replaces another in the popular imagination. Moreover, to the extent that polls have been done we find church attendance dropping, and people shifting from organized religions to less formal or more individualized forms of spirituality. In the traditional religious sense, our society is more secular now than before.

It appears that on the whole irrationality, belief, and credulity are at about the same level as they have always been, just distributed in different ways. What probably is going on is that this phrase is used to describe new and expanded beliefs (i.e. New Age type beliefs) versus established beliefs in society, with the new beliefs appearing as though there is an increase.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Section II: Arguments Against Specific Paranormal Claims

Argument # 16: Psychics and mediums use cold reading tricks and general guesses, not psychic powers.

Skeptics claim that psychics and mediums use cold reading to pick up clues about clients and amaze them. First, let me explain what cold reading is, then I'll explain why it does not account for all psychic readings. Cold reading is an umbrella term for a series of techniques used by magicians and mentalists (specialists in mind reading

tricks) to employ a variety of methods to gain information and clues about a client for a reading. These methods include but are not limited to: fishing for clues by asking questions, listening to everything a client says to get clues, making general or vague statements that most people interpret as hits, observing facial expressions and body language as you make statements, analyzing clues from a person's dress and demeanor, and other mentalist tricks, etc. (despite what politically correct people say, it is a fact that there are many things you can tell about a person based on their looks, even from a photograph) Even the smallest things can give a trained cold reader important clues about you. In conjunction with cold reading, another technique known as "hot reading" can also be used. Hot reading is the technique of investigating a person's background and records prior to a psychic reading to obtain specific information about them. Mentalists performing in stage shows often use hot reading to obtain prior information about audience members beforehand, such as maiden names, former addresses, etc. Cold reading can be used both consciously and unconsciously. Some cold readers knowingly use and develop their cold reading techniques like a skill or art. Others may subconsciously use cold reading techniques, attributing it to intuition or psychic abilities, thus deluding themselves as well as their clients.

Although it is true that there are many frauds out there who use cold reading the way mentalists and magicians do, it doesn't mean that every psychic is a fraud. That would be like finding some counterfeit money and concluding that all money was counterfeit. Magic tricks and genuine psychic abilities are two separate fields, rather than the same as skeptics like Randi would have you believe. Of course, frauds and con artists are part of every kind of business, not just in the psychic medium field. The problem with the cold reading/hot reading explanation is that for many accounts of psychic readings (including some of my own) the techniques do not account for the specific information attained. For example, some psychic can tell you very specific things about you without asking you any questions, which rules out the "fishing for clues" technique. If neither they nor any of their accomplices talked to you beforehand, then that would also rule out the same technique. If the clues they gave could not have been gained from anything in your appearance, then that would rule out the "visual clues" technique as well. For instance, if you were told the location you grew up in, your former last name, or an event in your past that doesn't show in your appearance, then the visual clues technique could not account for it. In addition, if the psychic who told you these things didn't know you were coming beforehand, as in a walk-in psychic fair, then that would rule out hot reading too. Unfortunately for skeptics, there are many cases of psychic readings where all of the above were ruled out. Therefore, cold/hot reading cannot account for every case. In such cases, the skeptic is left without explanations, but often continue to insist that the client must have given away some kind of clue, and demand that this be disproved first before imposing any claim of genuine psychic ability at work. However, if it was a past event, it is impossible to prove either way unless you could travel back in time, so the skeptic has their excuse to deny once again.

Let me give some examples of psychic readings that I know of where cold reading was either impossible or too unlikely to be a valid explanation:

1) One of my own examples is from a psychic reading I got from my acting teacher's mom about a year and a half ago. During rehearsals one time, I heard that my teacher's mom, Pearl, did psychic readings as a personal favor to people. A fellow student mentioned that she was amazed because Pearl told her that she had a certain tragedy when she was 5 years old. Curious myself, I decided to go up and ask for a reading too just for fun to see what would happen. Up until then, none of the psychics I went to before impressed me with anything specific. And since she was not a professional psychic, I didn't think she would have any incentive to use any fraudulent cold reading tricks. Pearl agreed to it and we sat down. All she asked me for was my birth date (a common question by psychics to supposedly open up the Akashic records that contain your karmic history), then she looked at my palm for a while. She did NOT ask any leading questions or fish for clues.

To my astonishment, she said that she sensed that I had a tragic period in my life when I was 9 years old. Somehow she could feel the emotional scars there, not from my palm lines she said, but from the vibrations she felt. This was very true because that year was the worst year of my life, besides the year that I was 16. Random guessing, although possible, was unlikely because if she had guessed any other year beside 9 and 16, she would have been wrong. By guessing, she would have had a 2/25 chance of being right. Furthermore, guessing was even more unlikely since she guessed the tragic year of the girl before me correctly too. Generalized guessing was also unlikely because if Pearl had guessed the age of 5 like she did for the girl before me, it would have been wrong. The day after this occurred, I wrote an account of it on a message board post, asking the skeptics to explain this. They insisted that either cold reading or chance guessing was used.

When I mentioned that all I was asked was my birth date, they insisted that facial expressions and body language were part of cold reading too. But when I challenged them to explain how my facial expressions or body language told her that I had a tragedy at 9 years old, they had no explanation except to repeat the same thing again and dodge the question. They were stumped! What the odds that Pearl gained such hits from guessing for both me and the girl before me?

Later, when I brought this up to a skeptic, he suggested that since this occurred a

year and a half ago, my memory of the events might not be accurate. However, I debunked his false memory theory on the spot by stating that I still had the message board post I wrote right after the event, which contained the SAME details that I remember now. After his case was blown, he suggested that if they were a school, they would have records of my past. When I told him that it was not an actual school, but a community theater acting class that had no records on me, (and didn't need them either) he was at a loss for explanations and challenged me to prove that I had an accurate memory of every detail that happened, including the color of the drapes, chairs, etc. and that I had a detailed transcript of the whole thing, or else I could not rule out that all other possible non-psychic explanations. This was of course ridiculous because it would be like asking someone to remember the license plate number of every car that they drove by this morning, or what they did 257 days ago at 3:15pm, for instance. He was obviously getting desperate for explanations here and to go so far as to challenge me to prove trivial things to put the burden of proof on me. This was obviously the work of a closed and biased mind. Besides, Pearl was the kind sincere simple next door granny type and anyone who met her would laugh if they heard the claim that she was a cold reader.

2) These next two accounts were recently related to me from my dad. The first one involves a psychic that he, my mom, and her friend met a long time ago back in Taiwan (I think it was during the early 70's, before I was born) While they were passing through a city that they rarely visited, they came upon a line of people waiting for a reading from this blind psychic who gave readings based on voices he heard. My mom decided on the spur of the moment to get a reading from him. Without fishing for any clues, one of the first things that he told her was that when she was a child, her mom tried to give her away for adoption to another family, but she later ran back home, which was TRUE! My mom was very amazed at the time, and her friend was so amazed that she tried to push my mom aside to get a reading too. He also told her other things that were true too.

Now, being given away for adoption and then running back home is not a generalized guess that would fit anybody, only a few people. Both my parents and my mom's friend can confirm this story, so it's not like it was made up out of obscurity. Furthermore, since this reading was on the spot and not prearranged, there was no possibility of hot reading or background checking. And since this was in a city where she rarely visited, there wouldn't have been people who knew her there that could have told the psychic about her beforehand. The skeptics I related this to tried to claim that since this occurred decades ago, the memories of the three people involved can't be counted on to be reliable. However, as mentioned in the rebuttal to Argument # 6, since this was a shocking event, the memory of it is the same it was at the time it happened (as in my own example above). Furthermore, since these type of amazing psychic readings already occur in modern times anyway, why couldn't they have

occurred back then as well?

3) Here's the second story that happened more recently. A few years ago, my dad and a coworker, Eileen, went to a psychic fair. They picked one of the psychics there for a reading and sat down. Immediately the psychic told Eileen that "You are in the process of moving" which was true because Eileen had already sold her house and was in fact in the process of moving. Struck with amazement, they arranged for a personal reading later on with the psychic. Skeptics I told this to claimed that the phrase "You are in the process of moving" was vague and could be interpreted in many ways related to changes in life. However, whenever I've heard that phrase used, it usually referred to moving residence. In either case, even if it was a general phrase, that still doesn't mean that it was just a guess.

4) This case I heard on my email discussion list is a very extraordinary one. Edith, whom has a history of giving good spiritual advice, related this story:

"I went to a Psychic fair in Chicago, all by myself, on the spur of the moment, then looked around and saw a little old man sitting all by himself, a bit away from all others. I walked over to him, asked him how much he charges, and sat down. He did not even ask my birth date or any other question, and began to talk about my children.

He said I had two children, a boy and a girl. I told him that this is not true, that I have two girls. He said that he knows different, which really upset me. He went on saying that the boy died right after his birth, and that my girl had died a few years back in a tragic incident, and that the second girl is not my own girl, but is adopted. He was right, because I had to admit that I no longer thought of my little boy any longer as a son.

(he was born 37 years earlier, prematurely in the 6th month of pregnancy, and had only lived 25 minutes.)

He then told me that I am writing a Novel, and began to outline the story, naming the character in the Novel by name, their roles, and how they related to each other, and the time frame of the story. He was right in the smallest detail, better than I could describe myself, having written it.

He told me that I would be teaching many people, and that people will come to my house to ask for lessons, but it would be out of the State, in the South.

(The South was the last place on earth I would want to live at that time. Neither would I want to leave my job, or my dream house that I had purchased only a short time before. It was months later that my husband was suddenly transferred to Georgia. Here I had an Art exhibition in Atlanta, and people had approached me to teach Art, especially oil painting.)

There were many other events he told me from my childhood, early adulthood, my former marriage, all accurate in every aspect and every little detail. He described the house I was born in, a house I had never again seen in over 46 years, and I had to look on an old photograph to check the details he described, of which I was no longer aware of.

He was correct. He took a pen and wrote my father's name, in my father's handwriting. (The old German script, which is no longer in use, called: Hohe Stolze.)

Now, I don't expect you to believe me, and I don't care one way or another, whatever explanation you come up with for all that, it does not change one tittle.

Just remember one thing: I had never been in Chicago before, other than driving through. Chicago was 45 miles from where I lived, and I knew NO ONE in that city, nor did anyone know that I would be going to Chicago that day, and I had no idea that there was a Psychic Fair to begin with, but rather stumbled on it in one of the Malls.

But most of all, that it was I who chose this particular Psychic among all others.

I had been to other Psychics, at different times, in different States and different countries, all without appointments, and without recommendations by anyone I knew, who had been most accurate in everything they said, three of which described the same Novel I spoke of earlier, one spoke of a book I had written many years earlier, even how many pages the manuscript was, how many chapters, and the general contents of it."

5) Besides using professional human psychics, one can use divination to obtain

information from beyond the 5 senses, as in this case:

"I was indirectly at a Ouija board sitting once when was 11 years old without any doubt it predicted the future accurately of myself my sisters and my brother. It spelled out whom we would marry and at what age and in what order. Even how many kids we would each have? I was extremely good at remembering all the information, as it was not the sort of thing we ever did as a family and it intrigued me. Of course did not realise how profound that experience was and how it has made me question all sorts of theories and concepts. I did not dwell on it too much at the time not really thinking there could be any truth in it. In my twenties we tried for the third baby and found had developed endometriosis had an emergency hysterectomy. I didn't believe it at all would never have 3 kids and recall thinking when I was 11 how sad it felt, as would only have two kids and the rest of my sisters and my brother would have more than me? They had what it predicted? The information it gave was accurate.

The things happened in the order it stated. ie. I got married when it said and before my sister who was a year older than me. Which at the time I joked about most eleven-year-old girls just automatically think an older sister will marry before them? I also recall its predicted I would marry just before my 22nd birthday that happened. It stated our future husbands surnames? (No it's not false memory syndrome or us deliberately searching out folk with those names (believe me have gone through a long list of 'how's & why's and where's and when?))

Believe me was too busy working to give it too much thought to any of it and RING is not by any means a common surname. (Neither is 'Ashby' my sister's surname.) At the time I thought RING when asked about whom I would marry was referring to a 'ring' as one being placed in marriage on the finger never realising until years later after was married sometime that it predicted my future name? I even recall it predicting my sisters future surnames now I am sure we all lead far to busy lives to be subliminally searching for names mentioned? The sequence of events date's surnames the order of events actually occurred as it stated? There's a lot of things have thought about here 'where did that information come from'? Did we ourselves produce it and how? It predicted my brother would be shot (we asked where? It said 'trunk') that is the only thing that's not transpired to date.

If it does occur I won't panic as it stated he would not die.

This is one of many very strange things that have experienced. If the information was correct for one of us then

perhaps it could have been coincidence or subliminal brain - consciousness processes in operation? Who knows?

The fact (and it is fact sorry you have to take my word for that) (if you can't then

'postulate' the concept for a moment

and try to focus on explanations?

We only ever did this once it was not a usual occurrence (hence why was so intrigued).
I must admit

Have no intention of ever doing it again either.

I very cheekily asked (being poor as you do) when would we win the Football Pools and
it just kept going to XXXXXXX

although I did not count them so am lost as to that particular answer? This occurred in
1974 and it has since made me

question many things.

This is one of many experiences that have kept me focused on gathering answers that
could possibly account for

how these things occur? It's most interesting."

As you can see, the facts in these incidents don't suggest in any way that cold/hot
reading was involved. Psychic reading accounts like this are abundant and come from
people of all walks of life. Anyone who does a little research could come up with
accounts like these.

In 2000, famous mediums were tested under controlled conditions by Dr. Gary Schwartz
of the Human Energy Systems Laboratory at the University of Arizona, which revealed
some astonishing results. The experiments involved a group of mediums and sitters
who were not told each other's identities beforehand. Separated by a cloth screen, the
mediums were only allowed to ask a few yes or no questions before giving their
readings. Their readings turned out to average between a 70 to 90 percent accuracy
rate, far above the chance level of 33 percent! The odds of this happening by chance,
according to Dr. Gary Schwartz, were one in trillions!

Even more astonishing, in the second experiment involving a different group of
mediums and sitters, the mediums were not allowed to ask anything at all, yet they
STILL retained the same level of accuracy as the mediums in the first experiment! A

report on these experiments was published in the January 2001 issue of the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research. The report, Accuracy and Replicability of Anomalous After-Death Communication Across Highly Skilled Mediums contains the following key excerpts:

"In a replication and extension experiment, medium's average accuracy an initial ten minute period that did not allow yes-no questioning was 77%."

"The data suggest that highly skilled mediums are able to obtain accurate (p less than one in ten million) and replicable information. Since factors of fraud, error, and statistical coincidence can not explain the present findings, other possible mechanisms should be considered in future research. These include telepathy, super psi, and survival of consciousness after-death."

"It can be seen that the mediums varied in the number of total items they obtained and the number of questions they asked. Medium 1, in particular, generated over 130 specific pieces of information yet asked only 5 questions, 4 of which (80%) were answered yes."

"Medium 1, who obtained the lowest score (80%), only asked a total of five questions. Hence, it is impossible to claim that medium 1's percent accuracy ratings (see below) were due to "cold reading" and "fishing for information.""

"Though names were rated least accurately, the magnitude of the accuracy was still surprisingly high (67% for sitter one and 76% for sitter two). Initials received higher percent accuracy scores (90% for sitter one and 100% for sitter two). Personal temperament information was very accurately reported (95% for sitter one and 93% for sitter two)."

"For the first ten minutes, the mediums were instructed to receive whatever information they could about the deceased and share this information out loud. They were not allowed to ask any questions of the sitters. The sitters were instructed to remain silent... The content of these two readings was dramatic. Information about the deceased son and dog were again replicated by both mediums. However, both

mediums also received information about the recently deceased husband. Medium 2 reported being confused, saying "I keep hearing Michael times two, Michael times two." The father's name was Michael, the son's name was Michael, Jr."

"The two right bars display the percent + accuracy ratings for the silent and questioning periods, combining the data for mediums 1 and 2. The average accuracy for the silent periods was 77% and for the questioning period, 85%. The total number of items received during the silent period was 64, the total during the questioning period was 157. The difference between the silent and questioning periods in percent accuracy was not statistically significant."

"The accuracy of mediums 1 and 2 was replicated, including during a ten minute silent period when no questioning was allowed. New information about the deceased husband was received by both mediums. More information was obtained during the questioning period than the silent period, and the accuracy ratings were somewhat higher. However, detailed information was obtained during the silent periods when no "cold reading" was possible."

"These two experiments provide quantitative data that are consistent with the hypothesis that some form of anomalous information retrieval was occurring in these skilled mediums. Traditional hypotheses of fraud, subtle cueing, and statistical coincidence, are improbable explanations of the total set of observations reported here."

"The present findings do not speak directly to the mechanism (s) of anomalous information retrieval observed. However, the apparent desynchrony of the medium's ECG's with the sitter's ECG during the reading periods compared to the baseline periods is inconsistent with a "telepathy with the sitter" interpretation of the findings."

"...However, it is important to mention that the mediums spoke remarkably quickly and generated a surprisingly large number of specific facts."

"For the first sitter, all five mediums obtained information about a deceased son. Three of the five mediums heard the initial M for the son, one said the name Michael. None gave a false initial or name for the son. Also, none obtained information about a

deceased daughter (her son did die, her daughter was alive)."

"Qualitative Example II: Receiving accurate information days before the readings

One of the mediums purportedly received communication from the deceased mother of one of the sitters a few days before traveling to Tucson. The mother purportedly conveyed to the medium a favorite prayer that she had regularly recited to her daughter as a child. Moreover, according to the deceased mother, the daughter was secretly continuing to offer this prayer for her. An assistant to the medium was instructed to locate the prayer, have it laminated, and gift wrapped.

When the reading was about to begin with the sitter, the medium unexpectedly reported to the experimenters that he had forgotten to bring into the laboratory a present he had brought for this sitter from her deceased mother. Surprised by the claim of such a gift, we instructed the medium that he could have his assistant bring it in after the reading had officially ended and the formal data had been collected.

The gift was brought into the laboratory at the end of the session and passed around the screen to the sitter. Upon opening the present, the sitter, in tears, confirmed that this was a special prayer her mother had taught her as a child. Moreover, she shared that she silently continued to say this prayer for her deceased mother.

Since the medium purportedly did not know who the sitters were ahead of time, and also did not know who was behind the screen, the observation of the medium receiving anomalous communication three days before the experiment and giving this particular sitter this particular gift raises challenging questions..."

Since they were published in the Jan 2001 issue of Journal of Parapsychology, more experiments have been done and can now be read about in Dr. Schwartz's book *The Afterlife Experiments : Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death*.

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series of techniques used by magicians and mentalists (specialists in mind reading tricks) to employ a variety of methods to gain information and clues about a client for a reading. These methods include but are not limited to: fishing for clues by asking questions, listening to everything a client says to get clues, making general or vague statements that most people interpret as hits, observing facial expressions and body language as you make statements, analyzing clues from a person's dress and demeanor, and other mentalist tricks, etc. (despite what politically correct people say, it is a fact that there are many things you can tell about a person based on their looks, even from a photograph) Even the smallest things can give a trained cold reader important clues about you. In conjunction with cold reading, another technique known as "hot reading" can also be used. Hot reading is the technique of investigating a person's background and records prior to a psychic reading to obtain specific information about them. Mentalists performing in stage shows often use hot reading to obtain prior information about audience members beforehand, such as maiden names, former addresses, etc. Cold reading can be used both consciously and unconsciously. Some cold readers knowingly use and develop their cold reading techniques like a skill or art. Others may subconsciously use cold reading techniques, attributing it to intuition or psychic abilities, thus deluding themselves as well as their clients.

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When I mentioned that all I was asked was my birth date, they insisted that facial expressions and body language were part of cold reading too. But when I challenged them to explain how my facial expressions or body language told her that I had a tragedy at 9 years old, they had no explanation except to repeat the same thing again and dodge the question. They were stumped! What the odds that Pearl gained such hits from guessing for both me and the girl before me?

Later, when I brought this up to a skeptic, he suggested that since this occurred a year and a half ago, my memory of the events might not be accurate. However, I debunked his false memory theory on the spot by stating that I still had the message board post I wrote right after the event, which contained the SAME details that I remember now. After his case was blown, he suggested that if they were a school, they would have records of my past. When I told him that it was not an actual school, but a community theater acting class that had no records on me, (and didn't need them either) he was at a loss for explanations and challenged me to prove that I had an accurate memory of every detail that happened, including the color of the drapes, chairs, etc. and that I had a detailed transcript of the whole thing, or else I could not rule out that all other possible non-psychic explanations. This was of course ridiculous because it would be like asking someone to remember the license plate number of every car that they drove by this morning, or what they did 257 days ago at 3:15pm, for instance. He was obviously getting desperate for explanations here and to go so far as to challenge me to prove trivial things to put the burden of proof on me. This was obviously the work of a closed and biased mind. Besides, Pearl was the kind sincere simple next door granny type and anyone who met her would laugh if they heard the claim that she was a cold reader.

2) These next two accounts were recently related to me from my dad. The first one involves a psychic that he, my mom, and her friend met a long time ago back in Taiwan (I think it was during the early 70's, before I was born) While they were passing through a city that they rarely visited, they came upon a line of people waiting for a reading from this blind psychic who gave readings based on voices he heard. My mom decided on the spur of the moment to get a reading from him. Without fishing for any clues, one of the first things that he told her was that when she was a child, her mom tried to give her away for adoption to another family, but she later ran back home, which was TRUE! My mom was very amazed at the time, and her friend was so amazed that she tried to push my mom aside to get a reading too. He also told her other things that were true too.

Now, being given away for adoption and then running back home is not a generalized guess that would fit anybody, only a few people. Both my parents and my mom's friend can confirm this story, so it's not like it was made up out of obscurity. Furthermore, since this reading was on the spot and not prearranged, there was no possibility of hot reading or background checking. And since this was in a city where she rarely visited, there wouldn't have been people who knew her there that could have told the psychic about her beforehand. The skeptics I related this to tried to claim that since this occurred decades ago, the memories of the three people involved can't be counted on to be reliable. However, as mentioned in the rebuttal to Argument # 6, since this was a shocking event, the memory of it is the same it was at the time it happened (as in my own example above). Furthermore, since these type of amazing

psychic readings already occur in modern times anyway, why couldn't they have occurred back then as well?

3) Here's the second story that happened more recently. A few years ago, my dad and a coworker, Eileen, went to a psychic fair. They picked one of the psychics there for a reading and sat down. Immediately the psychic told Eileen that "You are in the process of moving" which was true because Eileen had already sold her house and was in fact in the process of moving. Struck with amazement, they arranged for a personal reading later on with the psychic. Skeptics I told this to claimed that the phrase "You are in the process of moving" was vague and could be interpreted in many ways related to changes in life. However, whenever I've heard that phrase used, it usually referred to moving residence. In either case, even if it was a general phrase, that still doesn't mean that it was just a guess.

4) This case I heard on my email discussion list is a very extraordinary one. Edith, whom has a history of giving good spiritual advice, related this story:

"I went to a Psychic fair in Chicago, all by myself, on the spur of the moment, then looked around and saw a little old man sitting all by himself, a bit away from all others. I walked over to him, asked him how much he charges, and sat down. He did not even ask my birth date or any other question, and began to talk about my children.

He said I had two children, a boy and a girl. I told him that this is not true, that I have two girls. He said that he knows different, which really upset me. He went on saying that the boy died right after his birth, and that my girl had died a few years back in a tragic incident, and that the second girl is not my own girl, but is adopted. He was right, because I had to admit that I no longer thought of my little boy any longer as a son.

(he was born 37 years earlier, prematurely in the 6th month of pregnancy, and had only lived 25 minutes.)

He then told me that I am writing a Novel, and began to outline the story, naming the character in the Novel by name, their roles, and how they related to each other, and the time frame of the story. He was right in the smallest detail, better than I could describe myself, having written it.

He told me that I would be teaching many people, and that people will come to my house to ask for lessons, but it would be out of the State, in the South.

(The South was the last place on earth I would want to live at that time. Neither would I want to leave my job, or my dream house that I had purchased only a short time before. It was months later that my husband was suddenly transferred to Georgia. Here I had an Art exhibition in Atlanta, and people had approached me to teach Art, especially oil painting.)

There were many other events he told me from my childhood, early adulthood, my former marriage, all accurate in every aspect and every little detail. He described the house I was born in, a house I had never again seen in over 46 years, and I had to look on an old photograph to check the details he described, of which I was no longer aware of.

He was correct. He took a pen and wrote my father's name, in my father's handwriting. (The old German script, which is no longer in use, called: Hohe Stolze.)

Now, I don't expect you to believe me, and I don't care one way or another, whatever explanation you come up with for all that, it does not change one tittle.

Just remember one thing: I had never been in Chicago before, other than driving through. Chicago was 45 miles from where I lived, and I knew NO ONE in that city, nor did anyone know that I would be going to Chicago that day, and I had no idea that there was a Psychic Fair to begin with, but rather stumbled on it in one of the Malls.

But most of all, that it was I who chose this particular Psychic among all others.

I had been to other Psychics, at different times, in different States and different countries, all without appointments, and without recommendations by anyone I knew, who had been most accurate in everything they said, three of which described the same Novel I spoke of earlier, one spoke of a book I had written many years earlier, even how many pages the manuscript was, how many chapters, and the general contents of it."

5) Besides using professional human psychics, one can use divination to obtain information from beyond the 5 senses, as in this case:

"I was indirectly at a Ouija board sitting once when was 11 years old without any doubt it predicted the future accurately of myself my sisters and my brother. It spelled out whom we would marry and at what age and in what order. Even how many kids we would each have? I was extremely good at remembering all the information, as it was not the sort of thing we ever did as a family and it intrigued me. Of course did not realise how profound that experience was and how it has made me question all sorts of theories and concepts. I did not dwell on it too much at the time not really thinking there could be any truth in it. In my twenties we tried for the third baby and found had developed endometriosis had an emergency hysterectomy. I didn't believe it at all would never have 3 kids and recall thinking when I was 11 how sad it felt, as would only have two kids and the rest of my sisters and my brother would have more than me? They had what it predicted? The information it gave was accurate.

The things happened in the order it stated. ie. I got married when it said and before my sister who was a year older than me. Which at the time I joked about most eleven-year-old girls just automatically think an older sister will marry before them? I also recall its predicted I would marry just before my 22nd birthday that happened. It stated our future husbands surnames? (No it's not false memory syndrome or us deliberately searching out folk with those names (believe me have gone through a long list of 'how's & why's and where's and when?))

Believe me was too busy working to give it too much thought to any of it and RING is not by any means a common surname. (Neither is 'Ashby' my sister's surname.) At the time I thought RING when asked about whom I would marry was referring to a 'ring' as one being placed in marriage on the finger never realising until years later after was married sometime that it predicted my future name? I even recall it predicting my sisters future surnames now I am sure we all lead far to busy lives to be subliminally searching for names mentioned? The sequence of events date's surnames the order of events actually occurred as it stated? There's a lot of things have thought about here 'where did that information come from'? Did we ourselves produce it and how? It predicted my brother would be shot (we asked where? It said 'trunk') that is the only thing that's not transpired to date.

If it does occur I won't panic as it stated he would not die.

This is one of many very strange things that have experienced. If the information was correct for one of us then

perhaps it could have been coincidence or subliminal brain - consciousness processes in operation? Who knows?

The fact (and it is fact sorry you have to take my word for that) (if you can't then 'postulate' the concept for a moment

and try to focus on explanations?

We only ever did this once it was not a usual occurrence (hence why was so intrigued). I must admit

Have no intention of ever doing it again either.

I very cheekily asked (being poor as you do) when would we win the Football Pools and it just kept going to XXXXXXX

although I did not count them so am lost as to that particular answer? This occurred in 1974 and it has since made me

question many things.

This is one of many experiences that have kept me focused on gathering answers that could possibly account for

how these things occur? It's most interesting."

As you can see, the facts in these incidents don't suggest in any way that cold/hot reading was involved. Psychic reading accounts like this are abundant and come from people of all walks of life. Anyone who does a little research could come up with accounts like these.

In 2000, famous mediums were tested under controlled conditions by Dr. Gary Schwartz of the Human Energy Systems Laboratory at the University of Arizona, which revealed some astonishing results. The experiments involved a group of mediums and sitters who were not told each other's identities beforehand. Separated by a cloth screen, the mediums were only allowed to ask a few yes or no questions before giving their readings. Their readings turned out to average between a 70 to 90 percent accuracy rate, far above the chance level of 33 percent! The odds of this happening by chance, according to Dr. Gary Schwartz, were one in trillions!

Even more astonishing, in the second experiment involving a different group of mediums and sitters, the mediums were not allowed to ask anything at all, yet they

STILL retained the same level of accuracy as the mediums in the first experiment! A report on these experiments was published in the January 2001 issue of the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research. The report, Accuracy and Replicability of Anomalous After-Death Communication Across Highly Skilled Mediums contains the following key excerpts:

"In a replication and extension experiment, medium's average accuracy an initial ten minute period that did not allow yes-no questioning was 77%."

"The data suggest that highly skilled mediums are able to obtain accurate (p less than one in ten million) and replicable information. Since factors of fraud, error, and statistical coincidence can not explain the present findings, other possible mechanisms should be considered in future research. These include telepathy, super psi, and survival of consciousness after-death."

"It can be seen that the mediums varied in the number of total items they obtained and the number of questions they asked. Medium 1, in particular, generated over 130 specific pieces of information yet asked only 5 questions, 4 of which (80%) were answered yes."

"Medium 1, who obtained the lowest score (80%), only asked a total of five questions. Hence, it is impossible to claim that medium 1's percent accuracy ratings (see below) were due to "cold reading" and "fishing for information.""

"Though names were rated least accurately, the magnitude of the accuracy was still surprisingly high (67% for sitter one and 76% for sitter two). Initials received higher percent accuracy scores (90% for sitter one and 100% for sitter two). Personal temperament information was very accurately reported (95% for sitter one and 93% for sitter two)."

"For the first ten minutes, the mediums were instructed to receive whatever information they could about the deceased and share this information out loud. They were not allowed to ask any questions of the sitters. The sitters were instructed to remain silent... The content of these two readings was dramatic. Information about the

deceased son and dog were again replicated by both mediums. However, both mediums also received information about the recently deceased husband. Medium 2 reported being confused, saying "I keep hearing Michael times two, Michael times two." The father's name was Michael, the son's name was Michael, Jr."

"The two right bars display the percent + accuracy ratings for the silent and questioning periods, combining the data for mediums 1 and 2. The average accuracy for the silent periods was 77% and for the questioning period, 85%. The total number of items received during the silent period was 64, the total during the questioning period was 157. The difference between the silent and questioning periods in percent accuracy was not statistically significant."

"The accuracy of mediums 1 and 2 was replicated, including during a ten minute silent period when no questioning was allowed. New information about the deceased husband was received by both mediums. More information was obtained during the questioning period than the silent period, and the accuracy ratings were somewhat higher. However, detailed information was obtained during the silent periods when no "cold reading" was possible."

"These two experiments provide quantitative data that are consistent with the hypothesis that some form of anomalous information retrieval was occurring in these skilled mediums. Traditional hypotheses of fraud, subtle cueing, and statistical coincidence, are improbable explanations of the total set of observations reported here."

"The present findings do not speak directly to the mechanism (s) of anomalous information retrieval observed. However, the apparent desynchrony of the medium's ECG's with the sitter's ECG during the reading periods compared to the baseline periods is inconsistent with a "telepathy with the sitter" interpretation of the findings."

"...However, it is important to mention that the mediums spoke remarkably quickly and generated a surprisingly large number of specific facts."

"For the first sitter, all five mediums obtained information about a deceased son. Three of the five mediums heard the initial M for the son, one said the name Michael. None

gave a false initial or name for the son. Also, none obtained information about a deceased daughter (her son did die, her daughter was alive)."

"Qualitative Example II: Receiving accurate information days before the readings

One of the mediums purportedly received communication from the deceased mother of one of the sitters a few days before traveling to Tucson. The mother purportedly conveyed to the medium a favorite prayer that she had regularly recited to her daughter as a child. Moreover, according to the deceased mother, the daughter was secretly continuing to offer this prayer for her. An assistant to the medium was instructed to locate the prayer, have it laminated, and gift wrapped.

When the reading was about to begin with the sitter, the medium unexpectedly reported to the experimenters that he had forgotten to bring into the laboratory a present he had brought for this sitter from her deceased mother. Surprised by the claim of such a gift, we instructed the medium that he could have his assistant bring it in after the reading had officially ended and the formal data had been collected.

The gift was brought into the laboratory at the end of the session and passed around the screen to the sitter. Upon opening the present, the sitter, in tears, confirmed that this was a special prayer her mother had taught her as a child. Moreover, she shared that she silently continued to say this prayer for her deceased mother.

Since the medium purportedly did not know who the sitters were ahead of time, and also did not know who was behind the screen, the observation of the medium receiving anomalous communication three days before the experiment and giving this particular sitter this particular gift raises challenging questions..."

Since they were published in the Jan 2001 issue of Journal of Parapsychology, more experiments have been done and can now be read about in Dr. Schwartz's book *The Afterlife Experiments : Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death*.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 17: Experiments that show positive results for psi must be replicable to count as evidence.

Corollary: "I won't consider successful psi experiments as evidence of psi unless the results are replicated and peer reviewed."

Besides claiming lack of controls, pseudoskeptics also demand psi experiments to be

replicable to count as evidence. While this standard may seem reasonable scientifically, it is usually just another tactic to try to raise the bar, because no matter how many times a successful psi experiment is replicated, they still will demand a never-ending higher rate of replication. (If the 2,549 sessions of the Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments from 1974 to 1997 by different research laboratories which produced above chance results doesn't count as replicable, then what would?) This is because these guys are all about arguing and playing hopscotch games. No matter what, they never concede that they are wrong, and will use every slimy tactic they can find to deny what they don't believe in. If cornered, they will change the topic or rant about something irrelevant. That's just the way they are.

The first problem with this argument is that just because something hasn't been replicated doesn't mean that it didn't happen. For example, if an Olympic Track and Field runner breaks a world record, and other athletes don't repeat it, it doesn't mean that it never happened. Likewise, if I won a slot machine jackpot or threw a quarter that landed on its edge (against astronomical odds), but I wasn't able to repeat it, it doesn't mean that it never happened the first time. Similarly, phenomena such as supernovas, balls of lightning, and comets are outer phenomena not replicable under our control but are acknowledged to exist anyway. Therefore, replicating the appearance of UFO's or ghosts may not be possible because they are out of our control, but that doesn't mean they never happen or don't exist. All it would take is one genuine case of a UFO or ghost to prove that they were real and possible. As an unnamed law says: "If it happens once, then it is possible."

In fact, the very nature of psychic phenomena makes them not easy to replicate. Dean Radin, Ph.D, Director of the Consciousness Research Laboratory at the University of Nevada, and author of *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*, lists 8 reasons why this is so: (page 40)

"Psi effects do not fall into the class of easily replicated effects. There are eight typical reasons why replication is difficult to achieve: (1) the phenomenon may not be replicable; (2) the written experimental procedures may be incomplete, or the skills needed to perform the replication may not be well understood; (3) the effect under study may change over time or react to the experimental procedure; (4) investigators may inadvertently affect the results of their experiments; (5) experiments sometimes fail for sociological reasons; (6) there are psychological reasons that prevent replications from being easy to conduct; (7) the statistical aspects of replication are much more confusing than more people think; and (78) complications in experimental design affect some replications."

The second problem with this argument is that successful psi experiments definitely have been replicated by different researchers and laboratories. One famous solid example is the series of telepathy studies known as the Ganzfeld experiments, in which subjects guess target images while sitting with ping pong ball halves over their eyes and listening to relaxing white noise designed to deprive them of sensory stimuli to heighten their intuition and psychic abilities. These have been replicated for decades. Dean Radin, in the same book quoted above describes the replicability of the Ganzfeld experiments: (page 78-79)

“At the annual convention of the Parapsychological Association in 1982, Charles Honorton presented a paper summarizing the results of all known ganzfeld experiments to that date. He concluded that the experiments at that time provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate the existence of psi in the ganzfeld...

At that time, ganzfeld experiments had appeared in thirty-four published reports by ten different researchers. These reports described a total of forty-two separate experiments. Of these, twenty-eight reported the actual hit rates that were obtained. The other studies simply declared the experiments successful or unsuccessful. Since this information is insufficient for conducting a numerically oriented meta-analysis, Hyman and Honorton concentrated their analyses on the twenty-eight studies that had reported actual hit rates. Of those twenty-eight, twenty-three had resulted in hit rates greater than chance expectation. This was an instant indicator that some degree of replication had been achieved, but when the actual hit rates of all twenty-eight studies were combined, the results were even more astounding than Hyman and Honorton had expected: odds against chance of ten billion to one. Clearly, the overall results were not just a fluke, and both researchers immediately agreed that something interesting was going on. But was it telepathy?”

Radin further elaborates on how researcher Charles Honorton tested whether independent replications had actually been achieved: (page 79)

“To address the concern about whether independent replications had been achieved, Honorton calculated the experimental outcomes for each laboratory separately. Significantly positive outcomes were reported by six of the ten labs, and the combined score across the ten laboratories still resulted in odds against chance of about a billion to one. This showed that no one lab was responsible for the positive results; they

appeared across-the-board, even from labs reporting only a few experiments. To examine further the possibility that the two most prolific labs were responsible for the strong odds against chance, Honorton recalculated the results after excluding the studies that he and Sargent had reported. The resulting odds against chance were still ten thousand to one. Thus, the effect did not depend on just one or two labs; it had been successfully replicated by eight other laboratories.”

On the same page, he then soundly dismisses the skeptical claim that the file-drawer effect (selective reporting) could skew the meta-analysis results in favor of psi: (page 79-80)

“Another factor that might account for the overall success of the ganzfeld studies was the editorial policy of professional journals, which tends to favor the publication of successful rather than unsuccessful studies. This is the “file-drawer” effect mentioned earlier. Parapsychologists were among the first to become sensitive to this problem, which affects all experimental domains. In 1975 the Parapsychological Association’s officers adopted a policy opposing the selective reporting of positive outcomes. As a result, both positive and negative findings have been reported at the Parapsychological Association’s annual meetings and in its affiliated publications for over two decades.

Furthermore, a 1980 survey of parapsychologists by the skeptical British psychologist Susan Blackmore had confirmed that the file-drawer problem was not a serious issue for the ganzfeld meta-analysis. Blackmore uncovered nineteen complete but unpublished ganzfeld studies. Of those nineteen, seven were independently successful with odds against chance of twenty to one or greater. Thus while some ganzfeld studies had not been published, Hyman and Honorton agreed that selective reporting was not an important issue in this database.

Still, because it is impossible to know how many other studies might have been in file drawers, it is common in meta-analyses to calculate how many unreported studies would be required to nullify the observed effects among the known studies. For the twenty-eight direct-hit ganzfeld studies, this figure was 423 file-drawer experiments, a ratio of unreported-to-reported studies of approximately fifteen to one. Given the time and resources it takes to conduct a single ganzfeld session, let alone 423 hypothetical unreported experiments, it is not surprising that Hyman agreed with Honorton that the file-drawer issue could not plausibly account for the overall results of the psi ganzfeld database. There were simply not enough experimenters around to have conducted

those 423 studies.

Thus far, the proponent and the skeptic had agreed that the results could not be attributed to chance or to selective reporting practices.”

Another skeptical argument against the ganzfeld studies is sensory leakage. Radin addresses this as well: (page 81-82)

“Because the ganzfeld procedure uses a sensory-isolation environment, the possibility of sensory leakage during the telepathic “sending” portion of the session is already significantly diminished. After the sending period, however, when the receiver is attempting to match his or her experience to the correct target, if the experimenter interacting with the receiver knows the identity of the target, he or she could inadvertently bias the receiver’s ratings. One study in the ganzfeld database contained this potentially fatal flaw, but rather than showing a wildly successful result, that study’s participants actually performed slightly below chance expectation...

Despite variations in study quality due to these and other factors, Hyman and Honorton both concluded that there was no systematic relationship between the security methods used to guard against sensory leakage and the study outcomes. Honorton proved his point by recalculating the overall results only for studies that had used duplicate target sets. He found that the results were still quite strong, with odds against chance of about 100,000 to 1.”

Where skeptic Ray Hyman disagreed with Charles Honorton was in the role of randomization flaws affecting the ganzfeld results. However, as Radin points out, the consensus of the experts on meta-analysis is against Hyman’s hypothesis: (page 82-83)

“A similar concern arises for the method of randomizing the sequence in which the experimenter presents the target and the three decoys to the receiver during the judging process. If, for example, the target is always presented second in the sequence of four, then again, a subject may tell a friend, and the friend, armed with knowledge about which of the four targets is the real one, could successfully select the real target without the use of psi.

Although these scenarios are implausible, skeptics have always insisted on nailing down even the most unlikely hypothetical flaws. And it was on this issue, the importance of randomization flaws, that Hyman and Honorton disagreed. Hyman claimed that he saw a significant relationship between randomization flaws and study outcomes, and Honorton did not. The sources of this disagreement can be traced to Honorton's and Hyman's differing definitions of "randomization flaws," to how the two analysts rated these flaws in the individual studies, and to how they statistically treated the quality ratings.

These sorts of complicated disagreements are not unexpected given the diametrically opposed conviction with which Honorton and Hyman began their analyses. When such discrepancies arise, it is useful to consider the opinions of outside reviewers who have the technical skills to assess the disagreements. In this case, ten psychologists and statisticians supplied commentaries alongside the Honorton-Hyman published debate that appeared in 1986. None of the commentators agreed with Hyman, while two statisticians and two psychologists not previously associated with this debate explicitly agreed with Honorton.

In two separate analyses conducted later, Harvard University behavioral scientists Monica Harris and Robert Rosenthal (the latter a world-renowned expert in methodology and meta-analysis) used Hyman's own flaw ratings and failed to find any significant relationships between the supposed flaws and the study outcomes. They wrote, "Our analysis of the effects of flaws on study outcome lends no support to the hypothesis that ganzfeld research results are a significant function of the set of flaw variables."

In other words, everyone agreed that the ganzfeld results were not due to chance, nor to selective reporting, nor to sensory leakage. And everyone, except one confirmed skeptic, also agreed that the results were not plausibly due to flaws in randomization procedures. The debate was now poised to take the climactic step from Stage 1, "It's impossible," to Stage 2, "Okay, so maybe it's real."

Even after the successful replicable series of ganzfeld experiments, further replicability was found in the computer-controlled autoganzfeld experiments, designed to be even more efficient and controlled than the original ganzfeld experiments (although not

shown to be significant as mentioned above). This time though, two magicians who specialized in mentalism were brought in to check the protocols for cheating loopholes, as Radin describes: (page 86)

"In addition, two professional magicians who specialized in the simulation of psi effects (called "mentalists" or "psychic entertainers") examined the autoganzfeld system and protocols to see if it was vulnerable to mentalist tricks or conjuring-type deceptions. One of the magicians was Ford Kross, an officer of the Psychic Entertainers Association. Kross provided the following written statement about the autoganzfeld setup:

"In my professional capacity as a mentalist, I have reviewed Psychophysical Research Laboratories' automated ganzfeld system and found it to be provide excellent security against deception by subjects."

The other magician was Cornell University psychologist Daryl Bem, who besides coauthoring a 1995 paper on the ganzfeld psi experiments with Honorton, is also a professional mentalist and a member of the Psychic Entertainers Association."

Radin summarizes the results of the autoganzfeld experiments as follows: (page 86)

"The bottom line for the eleven series, consisting of a total of 354 sessions, was 122 direct hits, for a 34 percent hit rate. This compares favorably with the 1985 meta-analysis hit rate of 37 percent. Honorton's autoganzfeld results overall produced odds against chance of forty-five thousand to one."

Further replications beyond the ganzfeld and autoganzfeld experiments include the following: (page 87-88)

"The next replications were reported by psychologist Kathy Dalton and her colleagues at the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. The Edinburgh experiments, conducted from 1993 through 1996

(and still ongoing), consisted of five published reports and 289 sessions using an improved, fully automated psi ganzfeld setup. It was based on Honorton's original autoganzfeld design and implemented in stages first by Honorton, then by psychologist Robin Taylor, then by me, and finally by Kathy Dalton. Other replications have been reported by Professor Dick Bierman of the Department of Psychology at the University of Amsterdam; Professor Daryl Bem of Cornell University's Psychology Department; Dr. Richard Broughton and colleagues at the Rhine Research Center in Durham, North Carolina; Professor Adrian Parker and colleagues at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and doctoral student Rens Wezelman from the Institute for Parapsychology in Utrecht, Netherlands.

While only the 1985 meta-analysis, the autoganzfeld study, and the Edinburgh study independently produced a hit rate with 95 percent confidence intervals beyond chance expectation, it is noteworthy that each of the six replication studies (after the autoganzfeld) resulted in point estimates greater than chance. The 95 percent confidence interval at the right end of the graph is the combined estimate based on all available ganzfeld sessions, consisting of a total of 2,549 sessions. The overall hit rate of 33.2 percent is unlikely with odds against chance beyond a million billion to one."

Finally, at the end of the chapter, Radin concludes what the findings of the ganzfeld experiments and others before it suggest: (page 88)

"Now jointly consider the results of the ganzfeld psi experiments, the dream-telepathy experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, the ESP cards tests from the 1880s to the 1940s, Upton Sinclair's experiments in 1929, and earlier studies on thought transference. The same effects have been repeated again and again, by new generations of experimenters, using increasingly rigorous methods. From the beginning, each new series of telepathy experiments was met with its share of skeptical attacks. These criticisms reduced mainstream scientific interest in the reported effects, but ironically they also refined the methods used in future experiments to the point that today's ganzfeld experiments stump the experts."

Thus from all this, it is indisputable that we have solid scientific and statistical evidence that one of the most successful and controlled series of telepathy experiments in history, the Ganzfeld experiments, were definitely replicable. Therefore, the skeptical challenge has been met, and it's up to them to accept the obvious data or reject it. Radin's book describes many other replicable psi experiments as well, including ESP, clairvoyance, remote viewing, and psychokinesis. So I highly recommend it. For more

details about the Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments, see the following detailed articles which can be viewed online:

<http://dbem.ws/ganzfeld.html>

<http://www.tcm.phy.cam.ac.uk/~bdj10/psi/delanoy/node2.html>

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 18: No psychic phenomena has been demonstrated under controlled conditions.

Corollary: “Whenever proper controls are put in place, psi experiments only get chance results.”

This is another dogmatic belief by pseudoskeptics that is not based on facts, but on an a priori belief that psi is impossible and that only inadequate controls and sloppy methods can result in above chance psi results. Thus, any experiment that supports psi is automatically assumed by them to be uncontrolled, while any that fail is considered to be adequately controlled. However, this is simply not so because as mentioned in Argument # 17 above, the successful Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments were controlled. For an in-depth description of the controls used, see the following articles.

<http://www.psychicscience.org/papganz.aspx>

<http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/whoswho/ganzfeld.htm>

Dean Radin’s books *The Conscious Universe* and *Entangled Minds* makes a solid case for the validity of such experiments.

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Other noteworthy people who have discovered the reality of psi in the past whose work you can look up and research, are Ingo Swann, CIA Remote Viewer, and JB Rhine, the founder of Parapsychology who coined the term “ESP – Extrasensory Perception” after establishing it as a real phenomenon back in the 1930’s.

For more info on Ingo Swann:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingo_Swann

<http://www.remoteviewer.org/remoterviewing/swann.htm>

<http://www.biomindsuperpowers.com/Pages/Superpowers.html>

For more info on JB Rhine and his Research Center:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Banks_Rhine

http://archived.parapsych.org/members/jb_rhine.html

<http://www.rhine.org>

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 18: No psychic phenomena has been demonstrated under controlled conditions.

Corollary: “Whenever proper controls are put in place, psi experiments only get chance results.”

This is another dogmatic belief by pseudoskeptics that is not based on facts, but on an a priori belief that psi is impossible and that only inadequate controls and sloppy methods can result in above chance psi results. Thus, any experiment that supports psi is automatically assumed by them to be uncontrolled, while any that fail is considered to be adequately controlled. However, this is simply not so because as mentioned in Argument # 17 above, the successful Ganzfeld and Autoganzfeld experiments were controlled. For an in-depth description of the controls used, see the following articles.

<http://www.psychicscience.org/papganz.aspx>

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Here is a video of a public presentation by Dr. Persinger where he announces his discovery of telepathy and the implications of it:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9l6VPpDublg>

Other noteworthy people who have discovered the reality of psi in the past whose work you can look up and research, are Ingo Swann, CIA Remote Viewer, and JB Rhine, the founder of Parapsychology who coined the term “ESP – Extrasensory Perception” after establishing it as a real phenomenon back in the 1930’s.

For more info on Ingo Swann:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingo_Swann

<http://www.remoteviewer.org/remoterviewing/swann.htm>

<http://www.biomindsuperpowers.com/Pages/Superpowers.html>

For more info on JB Rhine and his Research Center:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Banks_Rhine

http://archived.parapsych.org/members/jb_rhine.html

<http://www.rhine.org>

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 19: Alternative medicine and remedies have no scientific basis. All claims of their effectiveness are due to placebo effect or coincidence.

This is a very presumptuous statement and a rush to judgment. It basically presumes that if we don't understand how or why something works, then it must be due to chance, the placebo effect or the person's own imagination. Since we don't know everything there is to know about the body and mind, why should we assume that only what we understand is real and the rest is superstition? There are already many functions, mechanisms and processes of the body and mind that we don't fully understand. Some examples of these are photographic memory, the ability of people with autism to perform lightning mental calculations, extraordinary and gifted musical aptitude in child prodigies, certain mental disorders, dreaming, aging, consciousness itself, etc. Now if everything we didn't understand was due to superstition, then nothing would have really worked until we understood how it worked, which is ludicrous and almost anything in nature can prove that wrong. Likewise, we still don't understand why women who live together tend to menstruate in the same cycles either, but that doesn't mean that it's not true. Just because we don't understand why something works, doesn't mean that it doesn't work. Reality does not conform to what we are able to understand. There are not two strict categories where either 1) we understand it, or 2) it's just a placebo effect.

The important thing is that if an alternative treatment works, then we should try to understand how and why it works, rather than trying to put it on the same significance level as placebos. Understanding the mechanism behind the placebo effect is important, as it teaches us more about the mind/body connection. Marcello Truzzi, one of the founders of CSICOP (who broke away from it later due to its rising fanaticism), has emphasized this to me before. Michael Talbot also pointed out in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 91)

"We now know that on average 35 percent of all people who receive a given placebo

will experience a significant effect, although this number can vary greatly from situation to situation. In addition to angina pectoris, conditions that have proved responsive to placebo treatment include migraine headaches, allergies, fever, the common cold, acne, asthma, warts, various kinds of pain, nausea and seasickness, peptic ulcers, psychiatric syndromes such as depression and anxiety, rheumatoid and degenerative arthritis, diabetes, radiation sickness, Parkinsonism, multiple sclerosis, and cancer.”

Besides, many alternative medicine practices are based on the power of thought and visualization. For those, a case can be made for the validity of the mind over matter theory since labs like Princeton’s PEAR research labs have pretty much proven that micro-psychokinesis exist. Even before this, an abundance of medical research already proved that a mind body connection exists far deeper than we had thought. In fact, studies have been done to prove the power of mental visualization techniques over the body. For example, Dr. O. Carl Simonton, a radiation oncologist and medical director of the Cancer Counseling and Research Center in Dallas, Texas, did the follow study described by Michael Talbot in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 83)

“In a follow-up study, Simonton and his colleagues taught their mental imagery techniques to 159 patients with cancers considered medically incurable. The expected survival time for such a patient is twelve months. Four years later 63 of the patients were still alive. Of those, 14 showed no evidence of disease, the cancers were regressing in 12, and in 17 the disease was stable. The average survival time of the group as a whole was 24.4 months, over twice as long as the national norm. (Footnote 1) Simonton has since conducted a number of similar studies, all with positive results.

Footnote 1 from back of book:

Stephanie Matthews-Simonton, O. Carl Simonton, and James L. Creighton, *Getting Well Again* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), pp. 6-12.”

Although there are plenty of quack things in alternative medicine today, the fact is that certain types of alternative healing practices have already been proven to work. Skeptics are often misinformed on these. One strong example is Acupuncture. When first introduced in the west, it was thought to be superstition and only due to the placebo effect. However, as it was more and more commonly practiced, doctors and the public came to realize that there was something to it after all. In fact, the American Medical Association now says that acupuncture is an effective form of treatment. There are

also plenty of studies to support this. Michael Talbot describes some of them in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 113-116)

“Although still controversial, acupuncture is gaining acceptance in the medical community and has even been used successfully to treat chronic back pain in racehorses.

In 1957 a French physician and acupuncturist named Paul Nogier published a book called *Treatise of Auriculotherapy*, in which he announced his discovery that in addition to the major acupuncture system, there are two smaller acupuncture systems on both ears. He dubbed these acupuncture microsystems and noted that when one played a kind of connect-the-dots game with them, they formed an anatomical map of a miniature human inverted like a fetus (see fig. 13). Unbeknownst to Nogier, the Chinese had discovered the "little man in the ear" nearly 4,000 years earlier, but a map of the Chinese ear system wasn't published until after Nogier had already laid claim to the idea.

The little man in the ear is not a just a charming aside in the history of acupuncture. Dr. Terry Oleson, a psychobiologist at the Pain Management Clinic at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, has discovered that the ear microsystem can be used to diagnose accurately what's going on in the body. For instance, Oleson has discovered that increased electrical activity in one of the acupuncture points in the ear generally indicates a pathological condition (either past or present) in the corresponding area of the body. In one study, forty patients were examined to determine areas of their body where they experienced chronic pain. Following the examination, each patient was draped in a sheet to conceal any visible problems. Then an acupuncturist with no knowledge of the results examined only their ears. When the results were tallied it was discovered that the ear examinations were in agreement with the established medical diagnoses 75.2 percent of the time. (Footnote 72)

(In the book, a diagram of a fetus shape in the ear is here)

(Figure 13 The Little Man in the Ear. Acupuncturists have found that the acupuncture points in the ear form the outline of a miniature human being. Dr. Terry Oleson, a psychobiologist at UCLA's School of Medicine, believes it is because the body is a

hologram and each of its portions contains an image of the whole.)

Ear examinations can also reveal problems with the bones and internal organs. Once when Oleson was out boating with an acquaintance he noticed an abnormally flaky patch of skin in one of the man's ears. From his research Oleson knew the spot corresponded to the heart, and he suggested to the man that he might want to get his heart checked. The man went to his doctor the next day and discovered he had a cardiac problem which required immediate open-heart surgery. (Footnote 73)

Oleson also uses electrical stimulation of the acupuncture points in the ear to treat chronic pain, weight problems, hearing loss, and virtually all kinds of addiction. In one study of 14 narcotic addicted individuals, Oleson and his colleagues used ear acupuncture to eliminate the drug requirements of 12 of them in an average of 5 days and with only minimal withdrawal symptoms. (Footnote 74) Indeed, ear acupuncture has proved so successful in bringing about rapid narcotic detoxification that clinics in both Los Angeles and New York are now using the the technique to treat street addicts.

Why would the acupuncture points in the ear be aligned in the shape of a miniature human? Oleson believes it is because of the holographic nature of the mind and body. Just as every portion of a hologram contains the image of the whole, every portion of the body may also contain the image of the whole. "The ear holograph is, logically, connected to the brain holograph which itself is connected to the whole body," he states. "The way we use the ear to affect the rest of the body is by working through the brain holograph." (Footnote 75)

Oleson believes there are probably acupuncture microsystems in other parts of the body as well. Dr. Ralph Alan Dale, the director of the Acupuncture Education Center in North Miami Beach, Florida, agrees. After spending the last two decades tracking down clinical and research data from China, Japan, and Germany, he has accumulated evidence of eighteen different microacupuncture holograms in the body, including ones in the hands, feet, arms, neck, tongue, and even the gums. Like Oleson, Dale feels these microsystems are "holographic reiterations of the gross anatomy," and believes there are still other such systems waiting to be discovered. In a notion reminiscent of Bohm's assertion that every electron in some way contains the cosmos, Dale hypothesizes that every finger, and even every cell, may contain its own acupuncture microsystem. (Footnote 76)

Richard Leviton, a contributing editor at East West magazine, who has written about the holographic implications of acupuncture microsystems, thinks that alternative medical techniques - such as reflexology, a type of massage therapy that involves accessing all points of the body through stimulation of the feet, and iridology, a diagnostic technique that involves examining the iris of the eye in order to determine the condition of the body - may also be indications of the body's holographic nature. Leviton concedes that neither field has been experimentally vindicated (studies of iridology, in particular, have produced extremely conflicting results) but feels the holographic idea offers a way of understanding them if their legitimacy is established.

Corresponding footnotes from back of the book:

72. Terrence D. Oleson, Richeard J. Kroening, and David E. Bresler, "An Experimental Evaluation of Auricular Diagnosis: The Somatotopic Mapping of Musculoskeletal Pain at Ear Acupuncture Points," *Pain* 8 (1980), pp. 217-29.

73. Private communication with author, September 24, 1988.

74. Terrence D. Oleson and Richard J. Kroening, "Rapid Narcotic Detoxification in Chronic Pain Patients Treated with Auricular Electroacupuncture and Naloxone," *International Journal of the Addictions* 20, no. 9 (1985), pp. 1347-60.

75. Richard Leviton, "The Holographic Body," *East West* 18, no. 8 (August 1988), p. 42.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 45."

An experiment described in *Discover* magazine (September 1998 issue) revealed that neurological evidence from MRI scans of the brain supported Acupuncture. Here are some excerpts from the magazine, which you can read online at http://www.discover.com/sept_issue/acupunc.html:

"Cho's unexpected relief prodded his professional curiosity. As a physicist working in radiology, Cho develops ways to image the complex inner workings of the body; one of his inventions was a prototype PET scanner around 1975. How, he wondered, could inserting needles into seemingly random points on the body possibly affect human health? So he decided to take a closer look, and what he found astounded him. While sticking needles into a few student volunteers, he took pictures of their brains and discovered that by stimulating an acupuncture point said to be associated with

vision-but that is nowhere near anything known to be connected to the eyes-he could indeed trigger activity in the very part of the brain that controls vision. There just might be something to this acupuncture thing, he figured.....

To test that premise, Cho strapped student volunteers into an fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) machine. While standard MRI provides static cross-sectional pictures of structures in the body, functional MRI goes further to reveal how those structures are working. It measures minute changes in the amount of oxygen carried in the blood, which is presumably a rough measure of glucose uptake by various tissues and thus a good indicator of which tissues are active; the results can be viewed as colorful fmri brain activation maps.

Cho first stimulated the eyes of the volunteers through traditional means: he flashed a light in front of them. The resulting images, as expected, showed a concentration of color-an increase in activity-in the visual cortex, the portion of the brain that is known to be involved in eye function. Then Cho had an acupuncturist stimulate the acupoint VA1. In one person after another, the very same region of the brain-the visual cortex-lit up on the fMRI image.

As odd as it seemed, sticking a needle into someone's foot had the very same effect as shining a light in someone's eyes. And this was not the generalized analgesic effect, produced by the primitive limbic system, that was seen in the pain studies; this was a function-specific response occurring in the brain's cortex, the area responsible for such sophisticated functions as speech and hearing, memory and intellect. Moreover, the magnitude of brain activity seen on acupuncture stimulation was nearly as strong as that elicited by the flash of light.

"It was very exciting," recalls Cho. "I never thought anything would happen, but it's very clear that stimulating the acupuncture point triggers activity in the visual cortex." To eliminate the possibility of a placebo effect, Cho also stimulated a nonacupoint, in the big toe. There was no response in the visual cortex.

Next, Cho tried each form of stimulation over time, twisting the needle for a moment or flashing the light, resting, then repeating. As before, the fMRI images were remarkably similar for acupuncture and for light stimulation. The time-course study was also done using the three other vision acupoints on the foot. The results were again consistent:

except in the case of VA2, each acupoint lit up the visual cortex exactly as the light stimulation had done. This time, however, Cho noticed something else. When the activation data were graphed to show the intensity of the response over time, he saw that there were two distinct reactions among the dozen volunteers. During the acupuncture phase, some showed an increase in activity, while others showed a decrease. In other words, in some people, oxygen consumption in that brain region increased, while in others, it decreased.

"I figured we must have made a mistake," says Cho. Repeating the experiment, however, he saw the same results every time. "Finally one of the acupuncturists mentioned, 'Oh, yes, it's yin and yang.'" Cho asked him which subjects were yin and which were yang, and without seeing the data, the practitioner correctly pointed out who had shown an increase in activity (yang) and who had had a decrease (yin) in 11 of 12 cases. "I don't know how to explain it," Cho says.

Like many preliminary scientific reports, Cho's small study raises more questions than it answers. Still, he has demonstrated new functional effects of acupuncture. "Classically, acupuncture was the ultimate in experimentation; people collected data for thousands of years," says Joie Jones, professor of radiological sciences at the University of California at Irvine and coauthor of the study. "They noticed that when you applied a needle in one position, it would have an effect in another part of the body. But the connection through the brain was never made. With these studies, we've demonstrated that for at least some acupuncture points it goes through the brain."

Yet even if it does go through the brain, how does stimulating a specific point on the foot trigger activity in the part of the brain that controls vision? There is no explanation for that either, says Cho, although he suspects that the path is along the nervous system. If that proves to be true, it's probably not the same pathway by which acupuncture causes the release of endorphins, says Pomeranz. "That endorphins are released by stimulating certain types of nerves in fibers anywhere in the body, that's understood. But that there is a specific connection between your toe and your visual system is really bizarre. That's really mind-boggling."

Despite the absence of clear-cut explanations, acupuncture's clinical results are attracting interest from mainstream medicine. A panel of independent experts convened last year by the National Institutes of Health concluded that acupuncture is indeed effective in treating nausea due to anesthesia and chemotherapy drugs. It is also helpful in treating post-surgical and other forms of pain. Moreover, the panel noted, despite the

pervasive belief in the superior clinical effects of Western medicine, plenty of conventional treatments for chronic pain show the same success rate as acupuncture-and often with harmful side effects.

One of the more provocative acupuncture studies used SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) to record images of the brains of patients with chronic pain. That study, by Abass Alavi, chief of nuclear medicine at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, measured blood flow to the brain structures that are suspected of releasing endorphins in response to acupuncture stimulus-the thalamus, hypothalamus, and brain stem. Comparing baseline images of people who were in pain with images taken after they received acupuncture treatment, Alavi found clear evidence of increased blood flow in the thalamus and the brain stem. He also found that treated patients felt less pain.

Like Cho, Alavi was not a believer in acupuncture or other forms of Chinese medicine before doing this study. "I thought acupuncture was more or less psychological, not an objective effect," he says. "I did this study just for fun. I figured nothing would show up."

To read about studies that concluded that acupuncture had an effect beyond placebo, see this article in Natural News.

Some skeptics have admitted that Acupuncture may be effective for some things, such as pain reduction, but they maintain that the theory of chi and meridians on which acupuncture is based, has no merit. Bob Carroll of The Skeptic's Dictionary emphasized this in his entry on Acupuncture. What they don't understand about chi though is that it not only works and gets results, but those using it also feel its effects too, the same way you would feel heat from a fire. In fact, this was shown on one episode of Bill Moyers' Healing and the Mind series. Moyers himself experienced this firsthand. A chi gong healer put his finger near Moyer's arm and Moyer smiled and said he definitely felt the heat go into his arm. (I too have had this experience when I was in Taiwan.) In the same episode, a chi master was also shown to be able to remain stationary while lots of other people tried to move him.

Chi practitioners can see and test chi at work just like we see gravity at work. Chi has been used by martial artists, tai chi practitioners, and qigong practitioners, to heal, move objects/people without touching them, strike hard body blows with a light touch, remain stationary when groups of strong burly men try to move them, snuff out candles

from across the hallway, and other feats. While everyone supposedly has chi, learning to control it takes years, though some seem to be able to summon it naturally. All a skeptic has to do to learn about chi is to visit a martial arts dojo where chi is taught and used. If they ask, a demonstration of chi can be made either on them or one of the students. I have done this myself and seen demonstrations such as masters sparring striking blows onto students (apparent by the painful grimace on the students' faces) without barely even touching them, if at all. I have also seen chi practitioners in Taiwan bend long metal steel poles with just their necks, and I inspected the poles afterward and they were made of steel alright. (I was told this was a common chi feat in Asia.) One time in a dojo, I held chopsticks in my own hands while a student used the paper the chopsticks were taken out of, to break them. (I still have the broken chopsticks today.) It would really be poetic justice I think, for a skeptic to feel the effects of chi firsthand J

In any case, the bottom line about alternative medicine/treatment is that it CAN work and it HAS worked before. Now I am not one of those anti-pharmaceutical company people who believes in forgoing all pharmaceutical drugs in place of herbal remedies or alternative treatments. One of the concerns of skeptics is that people may risk their lives by forgoing conventional drug treatments for alternative remedies instead. This, they maintain, is the danger of alternative medicine. (Michael Shermer loves to tout that as his motivation for debunking) However, I do not advocate that. I think that they should be used in conjunction. If one wants to try an alternative remedy that seems to work, he/she should in addition to prescribed medication given by a licensed doctor.

What skeptics don't seem to get though, is that the common sense rule is that if something WORKS, then people will and have a right to use it again, until it stops working. It's simple sound reasoning to do what simply works, and all creatures since the beginning of our planet have done that! So I find it odd that many skeptics are advising people to stop all alternative remedies even if they work, cure people, or save lives. Here is an example of what I mean which says it all, from an article about Homeopathy (energy water) in Psychology Today (March/April 2004)

www.psychologytoday.com/htdocs/prod/ptoarticle/pto-20040302-000003.asp

"Amy Lansky didn't care that homeopathy is one of
America's least accepted alternative therapies. After

nine months of homeopathic treatment, Max was a different child: talkative, active, sociable and popular. Under Melnychuk's guidance, Lansky gradually decreased his dose of Carcinosin, eventually discontinuing it. Max continued to improve. By age five, he was virtually indistinguishable from any other kid. "He now sees Melnychuk maybe twice a year," says Lansky. "As far as I'm concerned, he's cured."

Max's experience led Lansky to quit her job and study homeopathy full-time. Last fall, she hung out a shingle. "As a scientist," she explains, "I recognize that homeopathy is implausible. But I've seen it cure my son."

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 20: Miracles are impossible and defy everything we know about science.

We could begin this the geeky anal retentive way by attempting to define what a “miracle” is, but since any average English speaking person knows what it is, I think it’s unnecessary. The difference is that though miracles are generally assumed by most to be supernatural or paranormal in nature, skeptics consider such events to be merely “unexplained” or explainable by natural phenomena or spontaneous healing flukes.

These skeptics consider supernatural or paranormal miracles to be impossible. While not all skeptics adhere to it, there are some that do nevertheless. This claim is based on an a priori assumption that our known physical laws are all there is. How would skeptics know all that is possible and impossible though? Our natural laws are our interpretation of how the universe works. These laws are subject to change as new discoveries are made, which is how science has always been. (See rebuttal to Argument # 10) Current scientific principles only reflect the current knowledge that has been tested and replicated, not all that is or can be. In fact, what is considered to be miraculous or supernatural at first has often turned out to be natural once it’s understood. Dean Radin elaborates on this in his book *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*: (page 19)

“But a few hundred years ago virtually all natural phenomena were thought to be manifestations of supernatural agencies and spirits. Through years of systematic investigation, many of these phenomena are now understood in quite ordinary terms.

Thus, it is entirely reasonable to expect that so-called miracles are simply indicators of our present ignorance. Any such events may be more properly labeled first as paranormal, then as normal once we have developed an acceptable scientific explanation. As astronaut Edgar Mitchell put it: "There are no unnatural or supernatural phenomena, only very large gaps in our knowledge of what is natural, particularly regarding relatively rare occurrences.""

History has shown that those who use the word "impossible" are usually proven wrong one way or another. Many things that were said to be impossible at one point were later proved to be possible such as flight, breaking the sound barrier, space travel, relativity, quantum theory, etc.

As Arthur C. Clarke, inventor of the communications satellite and author of 2001: A Space Odyssey, states:

"When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong."

- Arthur C. Clarke's First Law

In either case, miracles do happen. Many doctors and nurses can attest to this. The question is, and skeptics like to point this out too, in how you define a miracle. Skeptics will usually accept miracles such as the miracle of life and science, or miracles due to flukes and rare chance occurrences such as spontaneous remission, but not if they involve supernatural forces or divine intervention. Possible explanations of miracles include supernatural forces, divine intervention, psychic abilities, unknown powers and healing abilities of the mind, spontaneous remission of illness, chance, or natural causes not yet understood. Whatever the case, the "miracles are impossible" argument is illogical because miracles have happened already. There is ample evidence of this both from anecdotes and hard evidence from X-Rays of the affected region of the patient's body that were taken before and after the miracle.

In fact, according to a Newsweek poll, described in the May 1, 2000 issue, 84 percent of adult Americans say they believe that God performs miracles and 48 percent report that they have personally experienced or witnessed one. Three fourths of American

Catholics say they pray for miracles, and among non-Christians, and nonreligious people, 43 percent say they have asked for God's intervention. Now, 48 percent of Americans is a huge number, about 150 million people. And that can't all be due misperception, mistake, or flukes on the probability curve. Common sense tells us that statistically, such widespread reports probably points to a real phenomenon, whatever it may be.

In fact, Robert S. Bobrow, of the Department of Family Medicine at the Health Sciences Center in Stony Brook, NY, cited genuine occurrences of paranormal phenomena in medical literature which might require a revision of our current paradigms to explain. In his report, Paranormal phenomena in the medical literature sufficient smoke to warrant a search for fire, he summarized:

“Summary Paranormal phenomena – events that cannot be explained by existing science – are regularly reported in medicine. Surveys have shown that a majority of the population of the United States and Great Britain hold at least one paranormal belief. Information was retrieved by MEDLINE searches using keywords ‘paranormal’ and ‘psychic’, and from the author’s own collection. Reports are predominantly by physicians, and from peer-reviewed, MEDLINE-indexed literature. This is a representative sample, as there is no database for paranormal medical phenomena. Presented and discussed are: a case of systemic lupus erythematosus ameliorated by witchcraft; an analysis of studies on distant healing; acupuncture, as a bridge between what is now accepted but recently would have been deemed paranormal; a carefully-done study of a psychic; auditory hallucinations informing a patient, correctly, that she had a brain tumor; two nearly-identical lay press reports of self-predicted death; lycanthropy (the delusion of being an animal); the development of Carl Jung’s collective unconscious; hypnosis – still questioned despite documented therapeutic benefit, and a well-researched report of a person speaking a foreign language, apparently unlearned (xenoglossy) while hypnotized; and multiple examples of children who spout the details of the life of an unknown, deceased person. The inability of existing paradigms to explain these observations does not negate them; rather, it elucidates a need for more research.”

To read the full report, you can download it from my site at:
https://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Paranormalphenomena_LitMedical.pdf . My Bobrow has also written a book entitled *The Witch in the Waiting Room: A Physician Investigates Paranormal Phenomena in Medicine*.

One famous documented case of a miracle is the case of Vittorio Michelli. Michael Talbot in his book *The Holographic Universe* describes the case:

“Perhaps the most powerful types of beliefs of all are those we express through spiritual faith. In 1962 a man named Vittorio Michelli was admitted to the Military Hospital of Verona, Italy, with a large cancerous tumor on his left hip (see fig. 11). So dire was his prognosis that he was sent home without treatment, and within ten months his hip had completely disintegrated, leaving the bone of his upper leg floating in nothing more than a mass of soft tissue. He was, quite literally, falling apart. As a last resort he traveled to Lourdes and had himself bathed in the spring (by this time he was in a plaster case, and his movements were quite restricted). Immediately on entering the water he had a sensation of heat moving through his body. After the bath his appetite returned and he felt renewed energy. He had several more baths and then returned home.

Over the course of the next month he felt such an increasing sense of well-being he insisted his doctors X-ray him again. They discovered his tumor was smaller. They were so intrigued they documented every step in his improvement. It was a good thing because after Michelli's tumor disappeared, his bone began to regenerate, and the medical community generally view this as an impossibility. Within two months he was up and walking again, and over the course of the next several years his bone completely reconstructed itself (see fig. 12).

A dossier on Michelli's case was sent to the Vatican's Medical Commission, an international panel of doctors set up to investigate such matters, and after examining the evidence the commission decided Michelli had indeed experienced a miracle. As the commission stated in its official report, "A remarkable reconstruction of the iliac bone and cavity has taken place. The X rays made in 1964, 1965, 1968 and 1969 confirm categorically and without doubt that an unforeseen and even overwhelming bone reconstruction has taken place of a type unknown in the annals of world medicine." (O'Reagan, Special Report, p. 9.)”

Some skeptics claim that miraculous healings are due to flukes in the probability curve. Their reasoning goes like this:

“Most people who are seriously ill are prayed for or seek divine intervention. The ones

that don't make it are considered tragedies and forgotten cases. The few cases that result in a sudden complete recovery or go into spontaneous remission are then noticed and attributed to prayer or divine intervention. These cases of course, are the ones that get media attention."

However, this explanation is a lot like saying that anything we don't understand must be due to chance. Sure spontaneous remission happens as well, even to those who are Atheists and those that haven't been prayed for. But even so, who's to say that spontaneous remission is solely the result of chance and luck? The bottom line is that miracles do happen, that is a fact. How we interpret them is the issue.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 21: The Skeptical explanation for answered prayers - Selective memory and coincidence.

Stated as: "Prayer only works because you selectively remember the answered prayers but not the unanswered ones, which are all due to chance and coincidence."

While this theory may be true in some cases, it does not explain every account of answered prayer. Again, just because skeptics can't see how a God could exist or how thought intentions could affect external reality doesn't mean that any claim of answered prayer is merely the result of chance. There are several counter-arguments to this and compelling evidence that prayer works as well. I will also give my own theory on how prayer works.

1) First of all, we don't even know what a coincidence really is or even if it really exists. It's just a term to define something that behaves unpredictably or doesn't behave according to a pattern that we can see. According to physicist David Bohm, there may be two kinds of order in the universe, implicit and explicit. (See his book Wholeness and the Implicate Order) Things that appear random may in fact contain a higher degree of order that we can't perceive.

2) Second, as I heard one preacher said "If answered prayer is coincidence, then there sure are many more coincidences that come up when I pray than when I don't pray." For spiritual or religious people, praying results in a higher rate of coincidences that help manifest the desire or wish, often higher than by ordinary chance. Of course, there are countless anecdotal accounts of prayer answered in miraculous or sometimes humorous ways. As Theology Professor Greg Boyd of Bethel University told me in an email:

"My wife prayed that God would honor a "deal" with her about who she would marry (this deal included her future husband saying a certain particularly unusual phrase), and despite all my frustration with knowing she had made such a deal, I said what was "included" in her deal with God without ever actually knowing what the phrase was, not

only that, it was the last thing I said to her, several times, immediately before I distinctly felt God leading me to propose to her.”

“The phrase was "It's good to be alive." This seems like a fairly unusual thing to say since it is so obvious at one level. Anyway, it is not something that I would be likely to say on an average day. On the day of our "engagement" I said it several times at just the right moment (during a prayer about our relationship) and actually the prayer (we were praying together) immediately followed a longish conversation about why I didn't believe in engagement periods at all. It seems God has quite a sense of humor at times.”

Amazingly, there are those who get almost every prayer answered because their motives come from a pure heart that is in tune with the values of their faith. What this means is that Christian prayers seem to get answered a lot more when they ask for things that a Christian is supposed to want. Same with prayers from those of other religions. This has been the case in my own experience as well.

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Nick, a Christian friend of mine, related to me a fascinating faith-transforming account in his life. After turning away from his Christian faith for years, one day his fishing boat went down in deep waters and nothing he and professional divers did could get it out. After months of failed attempts, he and the divers gave up. Then a friend of his told him "You will get your boat back. God will see to it." Soon after, some stranger called Nick and offered to help raise his boat for free. This guy said that he heard that Nick needed help and went to great lengths to find Nick's phone number to contact him. As we all know, strangers don't tend to go to great lengths to find you just to help you out for free and for no reason! That does not seem like an ordinary coincidence. This stranger even offered to pay all the expenses of lifting the boat out! (I've heard of random acts of kindness, but this is phenomenal!) It turns out that he barely got it out and it almost sank again after it was lifted, but the rescuer saved it just in time.

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This served as such a powerful sign from God and testament of faith to Nick, that from then on he led a faith-based life in God. Many other Christians have personal accounts of answered prayer similar to this of course. It would seem that God somehow hypnotizes people (for lack of a better word) into answering someone else's prayer, since these people don't know themselves why they're doing something that results in another's answered prayer. But this happens nevertheless, and my own example in the above paragraph attests to this as well.

4) Fourth, recent studies on prayer done by Duke University and others have revealed the effect that the power of prayer has on those who are critically ill. Double-blind tests

done have shown that those who were prayed for recovered much more quickly and at a higher success rate than those not prayed for. As one of Duke's own articles summarized:

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"In a feasibility study conducted by the Duke University and Durham Veterans Affairs medical centers, angioplasty patients with acute coronary syndromes who were simultaneously prayed for by seven different religious sects around the world did 50 percent to 100 percent better during their hospital stay than patients who were not prayed for by these groups."

While we don't know for sure whether God himself is answering these prayers, or if they are being answered by the psychic abilities of those praying, the bottom line is that prayer does seem to work in ways that ordinary coincidences can't explain.

5) Fifth, In my experience with prayers, it seems that prayers from a selfish nature tend to get answered less than when they come from a desire for what is right and best for all. One metaphysical explanation for this that I've heard is that when desires come from an altruistic motive, they reach the energy from higher astral planes or levels of consciousness. These higher planes are supposedly where more advanced spiritual beings reside, including Gods, Jesus, Buddha, etc. Perhaps prayers of a selfish nature cause a separation from you and your higher self that is attuned to the higher planes. This inner separation leads you to down the path of ego and illusion rather than unification and wholeness. After all, a divided kingdom falls, even if it's an inner kingdom. This theory is subjective and can't be proven scientifically at this point, but it's one possibility to consider which would explain why purer altruistic motives for prayer tend to result in a higher rate of success.

My own theory on how and why prayer works

Now, you may be wondering how prayers and miracles could be real supernatural phenomena, yet the religions behind them not be true. How could you harmonize that?

Well there are other explanations that theoretically harmonize them.

I have a theory which I call metaphysical societies. A Canadian colleague I had in Taiwan helped me formulate it. We were talking about religion and answered prayer, and how and why they worked. I mentioned that I had some amazing stories of answered prayer that I knew weren't just coincidence, when I was a Christian. Yet, the beliefs and doctrines of Christian fundamentalism have obviously been proven false for me in the literal sense, so I was trying to make sense of how prayers could still be answered. Aaron, the colleague I had these discussions with, then started explaining to me about "metaphysical societies." It made a lot of sense to me and provided a unified theory.

Here is how it goes. As we all know, in New Age quantum theory, "thought creates reality" in a universal sense, even though in our dimension, this principle is reflected much more weakly and slowly than in other dimensions. Therefore, when a group of people gather for a single purpose, they create a certain energy field between them that makes their power stronger. And that's especially true with organized religion. And in Christianity's case, with a billion followers, that energy field would be very powerful indeed. Therefore, when one is indoctrinated into Christianity, he/she also becomes part of this massive group energy field, and is governed by its principles, values and beliefs. As a result, when that person lives according to the values of this energy field, that energy field works to help that person in many ways, including answering its prayers. That is why, when I was a Christian, I found that when I prayed for things that I was supposed to pray for, that a good Christian should want and desire, it had a very high probability of manifesting and coming true, smoothly and easily. However, when I prayed and asked for things of a purely selfish nature, it had a very low probability of manifesting. I noticed this pattern. And when prayers came true, whether for me or others, it would obviously not be ordinary day to day coincidences or selective perception and memory, because the answered prayers would come about by seemingly improbable odds, all synchronized to manifest the result. Sometimes, in manifesting the prayer, people would be involved who did odd things and later claimed that they had no idea why they even did it, but what they did brought about the answered prayer. These kind of things tell anyone that it was a real answered prayer, and not coincidence or selective memory.

This same "metaphysical society" effect happens in other religions as well, since people in other religions get prayers answered as well, as long as they are in accordance with the values of their metaphysical society. I have even heard that with Wiccans, when they make a pledge to a goddess and then break it without asking permission of that goddess, they often reap bad or disastrous consequences, until they go back and ask

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[Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers](#)

[Argument # 21: The Skeptical explanation for answered prayers - Selective memory and coincidence.](#)

Stated as: "Prayer only works because you selectively remember the answered prayers but not the unanswered ones, which are all due to chance and coincidence."

While this theory may be true in some cases, it does not explain every account of answered prayer. Again, just because skeptics can't see how a God could exist or how thought intentions could affect external reality doesn't mean that any claim of answered prayer is merely the result of chance. There are several counter-arguments to this and compelling evidence that prayer works as well. I will also give my own theory on how prayer works.

1) First of all, we don't even know what a coincidence really is or even if it really exists. It's just a term to define something that behaves unpredictably or doesn't behave according to a pattern that we can see. According to physicist David Bohm, there may be two kinds of order in the universe, implicit and explicit. (See his book Wholeness and the Implicate Order) Things that appear random may in fact contain a higher degree of order that we can't perceive.

2) Second, as I heard one preacher said "If answered prayer is coincidence, then there sure are many more coincidences that come up when I pray than when I don't pray." For spiritual or religious people, praying results in a higher rate of coincidences that help manifest the desire or wish, often higher than by ordinary chance. Of course, there are countless anecdotal accounts of prayer answered in miraculous or sometimes humorous ways. As Theology Professor Greg Boyd of Bethel University told me in an email:

"My wife prayed that God would honor a "deal" with her about who she would marry (this deal included her future husband saying a certain particularly unusual phrase), and despite all my frustration with knowing she had made such a deal, I said what was "included" in her deal with God without ever actually knowing what the phrase was, not only that, it was the last thing I said to her, several times, immediately before I distinctly felt God leading me to propose to her."

"The phrase was "It's good to be alive." This seems like a fairly unusual thing to say since it is so obvious at one level. Anyway, it is not something that I would be likely to say on an average day. On the day of our "engagement" I said it several times at just the right moment (during a prayer about our relationship) and actually the prayer (we

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[Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers](#)

[Argument # 22: The Skeptical explanation for precognitive dreams - Selective memory and coincidence.](#)

Stated as: "The explanation for precognitive dreams is that you selectively remember the dreams that come true but not those that don't, and attribute it to precognition."

This is a standard cop out that basically says "If we can't explain something or it doesn't fit into our paradigm of reality" then it must be due to coincidence. To declare that with an absolute certainty requires that the skeptic have absolute infallible omniscient knowledge of the universe. They certainly don't have that. Therefore they are not qualified to declare what is a coincidence and what isn't. Logically they should just say "I

don't know", but as we've seen time and time again, they are prejudiced against admitting that they don't know something, due to their fear and psychological block against the mysterious. They hate mysteries and can't tolerate their existence, so they need to explain every mystery away. That's their philosophy, but it's not logical (unless you're going by their hijacked definition of logic which supports their warped philosophy). Again, they are making unqualified declarations due to their prejudices and biases, not objectivity.

Here is an example of a compelling precognitive dream cited by Larry Dossey M.D., author of *The Power of Premonitions*:

"Amanda, a young mother in Washington State, was awakened one night by a horrible dream. She dreamed that the chandelier in the next room had fallen from the ceiling onto her sleeping infant's crib and crushed the baby. In the dream she saw a clock in the baby's room that read 4:35, and that wind and rain were hammering the windows. Extremely upset, she awakened her husband and told him her dream. He said it was silly and to go back to sleep. But the dream was so frightening that Amanda went into the baby's room and brought it back to bed with her. Soon she was awakened by a loud crash in the baby's room. She rushed in to see that the chandelier had fallen and crushed the crib -- and that the clock in the room read 4:35, and that wind and rain were howling outside. Her dream premonition was camera-like in detail, including the specific event, the precise time, and even a change in the weather."

As you can see, this is a compelling case highly suggestive of our occasional ability to glimpse forward into time and space. But since it doesn't fit the pseudoskeptic's paradigm, it **MUST**, by their definition, be due to coincidence. It still constitutes zero evidence to them. This is not only faulty logic, but it's indicative of an agenda to suppress our expansion of consciousness.

Besides, we don't know that much about where dreams come from and what they mean to assume that they're nothing but random thoughts and images. We understand how people dream, but not why. Skeptics again are inadvertently claiming to know too much to declare something false or coincidental. In addition, the fact that there is convincing evidence for psychic phenomena in general such as telepathy from the numerous labs that did the Ganzfeld experiments, psychokinesis from Princeton's 20 year PEAR programs, and remote viewing/clairvoyance from SRI and other research labs, makes precognition much more probable than otherwise. You see, when one form of psi is proven, it raises the plausibility of the others by indicating that there are

indeed paranormal powers of consciousness that we don't understand.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 23: The Dying Brain Hypothesis for Near Death Experiences.

Stated as: "Near death experiences (NDE's) are hallucinations caused by the stress of an oxygen-deprived dying brain."

This argument, called the Dying Brain Hypothesis, is purported by many skeptics and materialists. NDE Skeptic and University of London Psychology Professor Susan Blackmore is one of the main proponents of this theory. In her book *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences*, she argues that the NDE is merely the result of hallucinations from the brain that erupt as it malfunctions and collapses. However, Greg Stone, an NDE expert on my discussion list, wrote an elaborate and excellent critique of Blackmore's book in his article *Critique of Susan Blackmore's Dying to Live*. He has also written an excellent in-depth but easy to read novel about NDE's entitled *Under the Tree* which presents all arguments from both sides of the NDE controversy (I consider it a must read for all seekers and enthusiasts).

The main criticism of her work by other NDE experts tends to be that she dismisses the vast data that doesn't fit into her hypotheses. NDE author Kenneth Ring, who wrote *Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience* pointed this out in an article he wrote for the Winter 1995 issue of the *Journal of Near-Death Studies*.

Although many features of the NDE can be explained by neurological or physiological processes, this doesn't explain the message being sent. In fact, the neurological effects could just be the result effects of the NDE, rather than the cause. Perhaps the TV/radio analogy to the NDE helps explain this best. As Kevin Williams of www.near-death.com explains:

"Such reductionism, however, may only be explaining the mechanism of the near-death experience, not necessarily the near-death experience itself. In the same way, it is possible to reduce a television set to its basic elements such as electrodes and tubes, but one cannot satisfactorily explain the television show being played on it using reductionist terms. Concerning the chemical basis of the near-death experience and using this television analogy, if the brain can be thought of as a television set, then the near-death experience can be thought of as the television show being played on it. Science maybe able to quantify everything concerning the television set components (i.e. the brain), but science is unable to satisfactorily quantify the television show being played on it (i.e. the near-death experience)."

There are several convincing categories of evidence to suggest that NDE's are not just mere hallucinations caused by a brain that is shutting down. For more on this, see

<http://www.near-death.com>. These tend to be ignored or dismissed by Blackmore and others who support the Dying Brain Hypothesis:

1) First and most importantly, there are many well documented cases where the NDEer while out of body were able to see specific details and hear conversations in other rooms and far away places that they couldn't have known about beforehand, and yet upon returning to the body find that what they saw or heard was in fact verified to be accurate and true. This is a phenomena that skeptics and materialists still haven't been able to explain away no matter how hard they try. Blackmore herself knows about these cases and even mentions them in her book, but she dismisses it simply by stating that she doesn't believe them. This of course reflects the closed mental model of skeptics who dismiss facts and data that don't fit into their hypotheses. If NDE's and OBE's were just dreams or hallucinations, then these perceptions at a distance wouldn't turn out to be accurate. The separation of spirit from body or the mind's ability to remote view are the best hypotheses that fit this well documented data. One famous example of this is the case of a nurse named Kimberly Clark. Talbot describes this incident in *The Holographic Universe*: (page 231-232)

"Such facts notwithstanding, no amount of statistical findings are as convincing as actual accounts of such experiences. For example, Kimberly Clark, a hospital social worker in Seattle, Washington, did not take OBEs seriously until she encountered a coronary patient named Maria. Several days after being admitted to the hospital Maria had a cardiac arrest and was quickly revived. Clark visited her later that afternoon expecting to find her anxious over the fact that her heart had stopped. As she had expected, Maria was agitated, but not for the reason she had anticipated.

Maria told Clark that she had experienced something very strange. After her heart had stopped she suddenly found herself looking down from the ceiling and watching the doctors and the nurses working on her. Then something over the emergency room driveway distracted her and as soon as she "thought herself" there, she was there. Next Maria "thought her way" up to the third floor of the building and found herself "eyeball to shoelace" with a tennis shoe. It was an old shoe and she noticed that the little toe had worn a whole through the fabric. She also noticed several other details, such as the fact that the lace was stuck under the heel. After Maria finished her account she begged Clark to please go to the ledge and see if there was a shoe there so that she could confirm whether her experience was real or not.

Skeptical but intrigued, Clark went outside and looked up at the ledge, but saw nothing.

She went up to the third floor and began going in and out of patients' rooms looking through windows so narrow she had to press her face against the glass just to see the ledge at all. Finally she found a room where she pressed her face against the glass and looked down and saw the tennis shoe. Still, from her vantage point she could not tell if the little toe had worn a place in the shoe or if any of the other details Maria had described were correct. It wasn't until she retrieved the shoe that she confirmed Maria's various observations. "The only way she would have had such a perspective was if she had been floating right outside and at very close range to the tennis shoe," states Clark, who has since become a believer in OBEs. "It was very concrete evidence for me." (Footnote 8)

Bruce Greyson and C. P. Flynn, *The Near Death Experience* (Chicago: Charles C. Thomas, 1984), as quoted in Stanislov Grof, *The Adventure of Self Discovery* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1988), pp. 71-72."

In addition, research studies back up these claims as well. One example is the experiment done by Cardiologist Michael Sabom. Talbot describes this as well: (page 232-233)

"Experiencing an OBE during cardiac arrest is relatively common, so common that Michael B. Sabom, a cardiologist and professor of medicine at Emory University and a staff physician at the Atlanta Veterans' Administration Medical Center, got tired of hearing his patients recount such "fantasies" and decided to settle the matter once and for all. Sabom selected two groups of patients, one composed of 32 seasoned cardiac patients who had reported OBEs during their heart attacks, and one made up of 25 seasoned cardiac patients who had never experienced an OBE. He then interviewed the patients, asking the OBEers to describe their own resuscitation as they had witnessed it from the out-of-body state, and asking the nonexperiencers to describe what they imagined must have transpired during their resuscitation.

Of the nonexperiencers, 20 made major mistakes when they described their resuscitations, 3 gave correct but general descriptions, and 2 had no idea at all what had taken place. Among the experiencers, 26 gave correct but general descriptions, 6 gave highly detailed and accurate descriptions of their own resuscitation, and 1 gave a blow-by-blow accounting so accurate that Sabom was stunned. The results inspired him to delve even deeper into the phenomenon, and like Clark, he has now become an ardent believer and lectures widely on the subject. There appears "to be no plausible explanation for the accuracy of these observations involving the usual physical senses,"

he says. "The out-of-body hypothesis simply seems to fit best with the data at hand."
(Footnote 9)

Michael B. Sabom, *Recollections of Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 184."

Also significant are the studies done that support the validity of Out of Body Experiences (NDE's are considered a type of OBE). Rick Stack describes one notable example of these in his book *Out-Of-Body Adventures*: (page 12-13)

"A notable study by Osis and McCormick involved an out-of-body subject trying to view a target that was contained within an optical image device and could be viewed only from a specific location. The target was a picture composed of several elements. These elements were not physically together in any one place within the apparatus. If you looked through the viewing window from a point directly in front of the apparatus, however, the various elements of the final target came together as an optical illusion. The OOB subject, Alex Tanous, was instructed to project into the room with the target, which was several rooms away, and to try to view it. Meanwhile, the experimenters attempted to measure physical effects at the target location (effects that may be caused by the subject's out-of-body presence). They placed sensor plates in a shielded chamber at the viewing location. The sensors were capable of picking very small movements, or vibrations, which would then generate electrical impulses in extremely sensitive strain gauges. These strain gauges, therefore, enabled the experimenters to note very minute changes in the vibration of the sensor plates. Tanous was led to believe that the strain gauges were being used only for a subsequent task in order to reduce the possibility of his deliberately trying to affect the sensors while attempting to view the optical image device.

Osis and McCormick thought that the OOB might be a state that fluctuated with respect to degree of externalization; that is to say, there may be degrees of clarity of intensity in the out-of-body state. It may be possible, for example, to be both partially out of and partially in your body. The investigators hypothesized that when the OOB subject was most fully out and, consequently, able to view the target more accurately, there would be greater mechanical (physical) effect caused by the experient's out-of-body presence than there would be when the subject was less out and, therefore, less able to accurately view the target.

The results of the Osis-McCormick study supported their hypothesis "that ostensibly unintentional kinetic effects can occur as by-products of narrowly localized OB [out-of-body] vision." In other words, apparently unintentional physical motion or effects can occur when someone sees something at a specific location while feeling that he is out-of-body. The strain gauge activation level that occurred when the subject was viewing the target and scored "hits" was significantly higher than when the subject scored "misses." This finding lends some support to the concept that the greater vibration of the sensor plates was caused by some exteriorized portion of the subject's personality. (Footnote 2)

2. "Kinetic Effects at the Ostensible Location of an Out of Body Projection during Perceptual Testing" Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research 74 (1980): pp. 319-329."

Another notable example was done by Charles Tart, where a girl known as Miss Z was able to identify a 5 digit number above her bed in a position that she could only have seen if she had floated up there. This experiment is described at http://www.paradigm-sys.com/ctt_articles2.cfm?id=50

2) Second, NDE's usually result in permanent life changing effects whereas dreams and hallucinations do not. Usually, real experiences are what cause life changes, not imaginary ones. NDEers usually report that through their NDE they gain valuable insight into the universe, about themselves, what their lives are really all about and how we're all really connected in a vast superconsciousness, etc. Many also report life reviews where everything they've ever done flashes through in a brief moment and they feel the impact of their actions on others, which allows them to reevaluate their lives from a much higher perspective. As a result, many learn to love more altruistically and be less selfish. In addition, most NDEers lose all fear of death as well, claiming that they've discovered that death is just a doorway, not an end.

3) Third, people have had NDE's while they were declared dead with flat EEG lines on their brain activity. Any activity in the brain/mind, even simple thoughts, results in some EEG activity. Therefore, it should be impossible (according to materialistic science) to have any kind of conscious experience while your brain shows a flat EEG line, yet this has happened with NDE's.

4) Fourth, some people have NDE's even when they were not in danger of death. Pediatrician Dr. Melvin Morse notes some of these in his article Are Near Death Experiences Real?: (<http://www.melvinmorse.com/e-what.htm>)

"The experiences do not only occur to dying dysfunctional brains. The Journal of the Swiss Alpine Club, in the late 1800s, reported 30 first hand accounts of mountain climbers who fell from great heights and lived. The climbers reported being out of their physical body, seeing heaven, having life reviews, and even hearing the impact of their bodies hitting the ground. They were not seriously injured.

Yale University Pediatric Cancer specialist Dianne Komp reports that many dying children have near death experiences, without evidence of brain dysfunction. Their experiences often occurred in dreams, prayers, or visions before death. One boy stated that Jesus had visited him in a big yellow school bus and told him he would die soon. Others heard angels singing or saw halos of light.

The American Journal of Psychiatry, in 1967, reported the experiences of two miners trapped for days in a mine. They were never near death and had adequate food and water. They said that mystical realities opened before them in the tunnels. They also said a third miner who seemed real to them helped them to safety, but disappeared when they were rescued."

Also see SCEPCOP member Travis Basinger's list of features of apparitions that suggest the survival hypothesis which Pseudo-Skeptics do not take into account in their hypotheses and refuse to include in their data.

For more on NDE's, this website has the most extensive information I've ever seen on the web: www.near-death.com. Also look for books by authors such as Kenneth Ring, Melvin Morse, Raymond Moody, and PMH Atwater. In PMH Atwater's book The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences, she writes of Blackmore's Dying Brain Hypothesis:

"A parapsychologist at the time of her original work but now focusing on psychological research, Blackmore has written one of the most influential books on the near-death

experience - Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences - in which she presents a detailed version of the dying brain theory. Her aim is to provide a materialistic interpretation of near-death states.

Blackmore's theory is too complex to present in its entirety here, but the following is a summary of it:

- Anoxia can cause the occurrences of hearing music (by stimulating the cochlear region of the ear), seeing tunnels, and seeing a light.
- An inordinate release of endorphins at the time of death are the source of the euphoria associated with a near-death episode.
- The actions of endorphins and neurotransmitters cause such cerebral structures as the hippocampus (associated with memory) to release stored memories, resulting in the life review.
- The sense of timelessness is the result of the breakdown of one's sense of self at death (the self being the basis upon which we distinguish moments of time).

To respond to each of these points is not necessary. Instead, we can offer a rebuttal to the whole by quoting Dr. Kenneth Ring's criticism from his excellent review of Blackmore's book in the Journal of Near-Death Studies (Winter 1995, p. 123): "Does the brain state associated with the onset of an NDE explain the experience or does it merely afford access to it?" In other words, although many (all?) of the near-death-related phenomena may be traceable to our body's responses to dying, does that mean that those responses explain the phenomena, or do they simply provide us with an interesting way of talking about them?

There is no answer.

To see this, consider the popular Psych 101 experiment of imagining that you're eating a lemon. Make that experience as vivid, as sensory-rich as you can. If you imagine it strongly enough, you'll taste the tartness and you'll begin to salivate - despite there not being any lemon in your mouth. So the imagination can produce the identical physical responses as an "objective" experience. Does this mean, then, that when you're eating

a real lemon, it's not the lemon but your imagination that's producing the physical sensations you're having?

Well, we know the answer to that.”

To read more on NDE's, see the following.

Kenneth Ring's book: Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience

<http://www.melvinmorse.com/light.htm> - The website of Near Death Experience researcher and pediatrician Dr. Melvin Morse, M.D.

<http://www.near-death.com> - A site with a comprehensive list of articles on the Near Death experience representing many viewpoints.

<http://www.nderf.org> - The largest database of NDE stories and articles.

Journal of Near-Death Studies

International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS)

Medical Evidence for NDEs by Pim van Lommel, in reply to a "Skeptic" article by Michael Shermer, presents strong scientific evidence for the reality of Near Death Experiences.

Here are some interesting video presentations and documentaries on NDE's:

Near Death Experiences: An Indepth Examination of Veridical Evidence & The Rebuttal of Common Skeptical Explanations – presents point by point arguments that NDE's are a nonphysical phenomenon.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIJXUi-z3Oc>

CBS news story on NDE's, presenting both sides

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tx3b2e1ZyQ8>

News report on NDE's:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBloBJAolhk>

Dr. Victor Zammit argues that NDE's are real:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16lQ3gWBPQk>

People who had a near death experience and saw Heaven and have returned!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsV2oWL0bK0>

Moving NDe accounts. The second account of the business tycoon was moving, and especially fascinating was the woman blind from birth who could see during her NDE!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsV2oWL0bK0>

NDE's: Heaven and Hell accounts

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn5Ob7UGJOk>

A great BBC documentary on NDE's, presenting both sides:

Part 1 of 6: http://youtube.com/watch?v=_I9-XxBAEsQ

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Argument # 24: Consciousness is neurologically based, dependent on brain and does not survive physical death.

Skeptics who say this do not really consider all the data and cases. There are too many credible NDE stories indicating that consciousness survives death to discount (even though one's consciousness in the afterlife realms may not be the same as in the Earth plane). I already outlined a list of features that don't fit this skeptical hypothesis

in Argument # 23.

There are cases where the NDEr has a full blown NDE during a flat brainline. One compelling case was that of Pam Reynolds, who during neurosurgery has both a flat brainline and a flat heartline, which astounded doctors. See her case featured in this documentary segment here.

As a result of such cases, Dr. Sam Parnia and other MD's presented the case for the Afterlife at the UN Symposium. See clips of their presentation here.

SCEPCOP member Travis Basinger lists here a host of features of apparitions which suggests that consciousness may exist separate from the body/brain that PseudoSkeptics do not take into account in their hypotheses and refuse to include in their data.

SCEPCOP member Victor Zammit, a retired Australian lawyer, makes the case for the Afterlife in his website and free ebook here.

He now has publicly issued his own million dollar challenge to anyone who can refute his afterlife evidence, to counter that of paranormal debunker James Randi.

His rebuttals to skeptics and debunkers can be found here.

Zammit now has videos up on YouTube.com about these topics, which you can find in his channel here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/victorzammit>

There are many other sites and information that can be found on the internet about this subject which you can see a list of by Googling "life after death", but the one above will give you a fantastic overview and starting point if you wish to research this topic. Here are some others:

- The NDERF (Near Death Experience Research Foundation) contains the largest database of NDE cases.

- The International Survivalist Society contains news, articles, and research on life after death.

- Survival After Death - Campaign for Philosophical Freedom. Compiled by Michael Roll, who has been a long-time UK campaigner for study of the Afterlife to be treated as a branch of physics and for unbiased media reporting of afterlife research. His site contains many useful articles and links. One of the best articles on there is The Scientific Proof of Survival After Death.

- Finally, as mentioned in Argument # 16, Dr. Gary Schwartz of The Human Energy Lab of Tucson University has done a series of experiments on mediumship which gave overwhelming results. See his book The Afterlife Experiments: Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death. His website is at: <http://www.openmindsciences.com/>

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Argument # 25: Spiritual experiences only exist in your mind, not in external reality.

Since no one knows all that exists in all of reality, including skeptics, no one can say with infallible authority what exists and what doesn't. Even if we take something out of fantasy like unicorns and dragons, for instance, we don't know that those type of creatures don't exist in the trillions of other planets in the universe since we haven't even been to any others beside our own. Furthermore, string theory in physics suggest that there may be many dimensions, which if true may suggest other planes or levels of reality that we don't understand yet. These other levels of reality could contain creatures or beings that we can't even imagine, even unicorns and dragons. Even arch skeptic James Randi has said that to say that something doesn't exist is an extraordinary claim (though he has contradicted himself on this).

Therefore, this is another unqualified pseudoskeptical statement based on their biases and prejudices, not based on objectivity. We simply don't know many things, and neither do they. The difference is, we admit it, whereas they won't.

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Argument # 26: Paranormal beliefs are childish fantasies for dealing with a cold uncaring world.

This is another biased statement of belief. Most psychic experiences don't come as fantasies or wishful thinking, but as firsthand direct experiences. Often the experiencer doesn't even choose to have them in the first place, as in the accounts of those who have sudden NDE's or OBE's. Mature adults who are not childish in attitude or behavior have had paranormal or psychic experiences. There are also many rational, down-to-earth people (both mentally and physically) who believe in God too. In addition, even if a belief or religion is used to cope with life, that doesn't mean that the belief or religion is totally false. If it works, then there is something real to it, one way or another, on this plane or another. (See similar rebuttal in Argument # 14)

Also, consider this. Belief in God is innate, as these studies show.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article6823229.ece>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2008/nov/25/religion-children-god-belief>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/religion/3512686/Children-are-born-believe-in-God-academic-claims.html>

We are born with a natural belief in God and the spiritual, and are more prone as children to believing in “fantasies”. When we become adults, some of us turn into Atheists, yes. But in old age, most people end up concluding after a whole lifetime of experiences, that there is “something out there” beyond the physical, some guiding consciousness, and that “everything happens for a reason”.

One might argue that they are just looking for a reason to believe in life after death as they near the end of it. But fear is never sustainable as a prime motivator in any belief. These folks are basing their conclusions on a bigger picture view of life they’ve obtained after connecting so many dots in the events of their lives. Plus it could be that as one approaches death, one becomes more attuned with the “metaphysical realm” that they originally came from, as they did when they were children coming out of it, and so move toward a different consciousness again. This might explain why children and elderly adults tend to be less uptight and more easy going than young to middle age adults.

Either way, we should be focusing on the experiences and evidence of these many people, rather than trying to ridicule and judge them with biased accusatory terms which contribute nothing in the search for truth.

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Argument # 27: There is no evidence to support the existence of UFO's or Aliens.

See Argument # 2, point 7.

You may also find these testimonials at press conferences by high ranking government, military and intelligence officials confessing their knowledge of government involvement in UFO's to be highly convincing.

[UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2001](#)

[UFO Disclosure Press Conference - 2010](#)

Also see James Fox's compelling UFO films [Out of the Blue](#) and [I Know What I Saw](#) which you can see on YouTube.

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Argument # 28: Evolution is sufficient to explain the origin of life, so God is not needed.

This is more of a religion than reality. Evolution has only been proven at the micro level, not the macro level. While small changes within a species have been demonstrated and observed, the theory that one species can transition to another has never been proven in any way.

The truth is, there are huge gaps and missing links in the current model of Evolution. No transitional species have been found that links humans to the prehistoric hominids or primates. And the transitions that allegedly took place, if it did, was way too quick to be natural.

Humans are also not equipped to survive in the wilderness of nature and cannot compete with the wild animals there in terms of physical strength and adaptability. Thus they could not have evolved naturally in the wild through Evolution alone. Our biological human physique is obvious evidence of this. Furthermore, no human fossils dating back beyond 200,000 years has ever been found. Moreover, the makeup of our genes contain many clues and bits of data that does not fit into the Evolutionary model. (see the presentation below by Lloyd Pye for details) And of course, science cannot explain how life began at all or how the first cell became self-replicating. Even Richard Dawkins, the most famous staunch advocate of Evolution, admits this. (see the end of the Ben Stein film below for Dawkins' confession)

These unexplained mysteries and discrepancies have never been solved by the scientific establishment. Instead, they are just brushed under the carpet, denied and given copout explanations and leaps of faith arguments. The scientific establishment has too much invested in its current paradigm to change its mind or rethink its theories. They also ridicule and ostracize dissent so that scientists are required to tow the party line in order to keep their careers and be promoted. In other words, freethought or questioning is not allowed. In short, they've created a "forced consensus" that is run by pressure and punishment, rather than freethought.

To see an excellent documentary that explores the suppression of "intelligent design" in the scientific establishment and universities, see Ben Stein's revealing film "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed" on YouTube here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fj8xyMsbkO4>

Now, I do not claim to have all the answers to such mysteries. But there are some researchers who have invested a lot of time in this subject that are worth listening to. One such example is Lloyd Pye, a tireless anthropology researcher who has pioneered what he calls an "Intervention Theory". See this outstanding presentation by Pye: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNGngZsxAhw>

For more info, see Lloyd Pye's website and book *Everything You Know Is Wrong*.

Now, even if micro Evolution is true, it does not rule out the existence of God or a cosmic universal consciousness. Greg Stone, author of *Under the Tree*, put it eloquently on my discussion list:

"Not only is there a residue of feeling, but there is a sound argument that Darwinian evolution is not big enough. It is not. Darwinian evolution deals with the specific nature of the evolution of biological forms on this planet. And it fails to account entirely even for that realm. It does not account for the overall evolution of complexity within the universe, which then leads to the "special case" of Darwinian evolution. It does not account for the origin of life forms, and most importantly it in no way accounts for the existence of the spirit and the spirit's effect upon the evolution of forms. Thus, Darwinian Evolution is incomplete when it comes to explaining life. And those, like Dawkins, Blackmore, Pinker, etc. who try to make Darwinian Evolution do more than it can will be seen in the long run to have been quite foolish."

Some researchers have argued that it is mathematically impossible for life to evolve by chance on its own because of the astronomical impossibility of the conditions for life being set up by chance. Theist J.P. Moreland presented the arguments for this, using math and science, in his debate against Atheist Kai Neilsen, described in the book *Does God Exist?: The Debate Between Theists & Atheists*. In his debate with Atheist Kai Neilsen, Moreland explains with math and science why chance alone could not explain how the conditions for life evolved.

One thing the Atheists can never explain is "Who set up the vastly improbable default conditions for life to evolve in the FIRST PLACE? Where did the matter to create the universe and life come from? How did something come from nothing?" It's kind of like

this: We know the mechanics behind how and why a pot boils, but that doesn't tell us about the person who put the pot on the stove.

Some Atheists also like to point out that the need for belief in God can also be explained by Evolution. However, David Marshall, a Christian missionary and philosopher rebuts that point well when he stated in my discussion list:

"To make the jump from "evolution can explain belief in God" to "there is no God" without involved argument would be the generic fallacy, again. To repeat my earlier example, even if you can explain the human ability to do math by evolution, that does not prove math is invalid. In theory, it should be possible (given your presuppositions) to show how the human faculty for mathematics arose through natural processes. That does not mean $E=MC^2$ does not accurately describe real events in the real universe. The fact that evolution may have created an awareness of dependency on one's mother on a child's part, does not mean real mothers do not exist and do not care for their children. In the same way, even if you were able to describe the evolution of faith in God, it would still remain an entirely separate argument, whether God exists in fact or not."

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Argument # 29: Atheists don't claim that God doesn't exist. They lack belief in God. The burden of proof for God is on the Theist, not the Atheist.

This is a technicality that Atheists use to try to put the burden on the other side. They claim that since "A-theism" means "without a belief in God", they are not claiming anything and therefore do not have to prove anything. Thus, they claim, the burden of proof is on the Theist, who claims that God exists.

However, this makes little difference either way because their core philosophy toward God is still the same. Deep down, they believe that there is no God, and they know it. The reason why they emphasize this is to try to put themselves in an unattackable position. It's a semantic ploy. To try to be consistent with it, they will say "There is no evidence for God" rather than "God doesn't exist", but sometimes they slip up.

They can't really prove that God doesn't exist because you can't prove a negative. Regardless, the Atheist obviously believes deep down that there isn't a God or deity anyway, which is prevalent in their attempts to debunk and refute every single argument for the existence of God. Therefore this trivial debate about the implications of the word "Atheism" seems pointless in substance.

For some critiques of Atheist arguments, see these links:

"How to respond to a Supercilious Atheist":

http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/01/how_to_respond_to_a_supercilio.html

"The Irrational Atheists", has a free ebook you can download:

<http://www.irrationalatheist.com>

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Argument # 30: The James Randi Million Dollar Psychic Challenge argument

In case you don't know, James Randi is the most celebrated of the organized skeptics who founded the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF). Skilled and versed in the art of stage magic, Mr. Randi claims to be better able to detect fraud and trickery from psychics and mediums better than scientists can. He gives speeches attempting to "educate" (or brainwash rather, in my view) the public about psychics and paranormal phenomena, which he claims is all deception or self-delusion. He has written books such as *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural* and *Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions*, made a PBS documentary called "Secrets of the Psychics", attacked the reputation of psychics and healers such as Israeli-born spoon bender Uri Geller, debated with psychics on CNN's *Larry King Live*, etc.

In the original version of this book back in 2001, I decided not to address this argument because I didn't like to create whole arguments against specific individuals. However, at this point the infamous James Randi and his supporters have made it practically unavoidable. He is so deeply publicly involved in debunking parapsychology in the media, that to ignore him would be tantamount to ignoring Darth Vader in *Star Wars*. Paranormal debunkers now commonly use Randi's psychic challenge to argue that there are no genuine paranormal or psychic abilities, else they would apply for the challenge and win. Therefore, in this new edition of this book, I've had to add a section on it as it is one of the most often mentioned arguments by organized skeptics.

There are many obvious problems with this argument of course, since one magician with an axe to grind and hosting a publicity stunt does not debunk all the paranormal experiences in the world. They still happen everyday to people all over the world. Randi's critics claim is mostly a publicity stunt for his career due to the fact that 1) Randi is extremely selective in who he tests, preferring to only test famous names to boost his own career, and that 2) there are many applicants who received no response after applying. Plus, based on numerous testimonials from challenge applicants and para-researchers, there is much circumstantial evidence that Randi is not that honest, for he has used plenty of deceptive and dishonest tactics in the past. There are many reports and analyses of him that indicate this and damage his credibility. I've provided a list of them below so you can research them yourself.

The *Myth of the Randi Challenge* by the Daily Grail, points out a list of events that show how Randi keeps the challenge unwon by raising the bar to impossible and unreasonable standards, and using other dishonest sleight-of-hand tactics.

Randi Backs out of Challenge with Homeopath George Vitalhoukas, reneging on a long term agreement. I guess when someone's about to win, he gets scared and finds excuses not to go through with it.

The Randi Challenge – A thorough analysis by Michael Prescott

Randi caught lying on several assertions by telepathy researcher Rupert Sheldrake

Victor Zammit, a lawyer who presents the case for the afterlife, has a critique and counter to the Randi Challenge at: <http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/reward.html>
His video exposing the Randi Challenge is here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_91wrhZhTFE

My friend Michael Goodspeed recently also wrote a great article detailing the hypocrisy of Randi and his challenge, which you can read at
<http://www.rense.com/general50/james.htm>.

Psychic Challenge - An article challenging James Randi to live up to his repeated assertion that if adequate evidence of a paranormal reality could be demonstrated to him, he would be happy to acknowledge it and pay the one million dollar prize to the claimant. Includes accounts of Randi's shortcomings and mistakes. (You can read Randi's response to it at: <http://www.randi.org/jr/091903.html>)

Flim-Flam Flummery: A Skeptical Look at James Randi - A comprehensive article by Michael Prescott which investigates, analyzes and exposes many errors and mistakes Randi made in his book Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions. Includes a response by Randi, followed by Prescott's rebuttal and analysis of the disputed issues.

Montague Keen's challenges to Mr. Randi to live up to his pledges and promises regarding the million dollar challenge:
<http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/keen/randi.htm>
<http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/keen/jamesrandi.htm>

James Randi's Funding? - On Jeff Rense, Michael Roll discusses radio shows where Randi was defeated and shamed in debate against qualified scientists, but which didn't reach the public, possibly due to Randi's doing.

The Problem with James Randi - An article by Skylaire Alfvegren on the Jeff Rense site about where Randi and his group fails.

Darryl Sloan, a balanced freethinker and telekinesis researcher with a large following on YouTube, explains in this video why faith in the Randi Challenge is irrational:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujqVwcZg_mA (his channel contains many high quality well thought-out videos: <http://www.youtube.com/darrylsloan>)

A cursory look at Randi's articles on his website www.randi.org will reveal to any objective observer that although this man is very good at playing intellectual gymnastics in his commentaries and debates. He will do whatever it takes to win, even committing foul play. There is no question that his mind is made up and that he has an axe to grind.

In addition, Randi seems to have a tendency to distort facts for his purposes. For instance, Harold Puthoff, a researcher at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) which is famous for conducting experiments on remote viewing and Uri Geller's psychic abilities, told me in an email:

"<< All the skeptics I've debated said that the SRI tests were totally discredited and debunked already. Is this true? >>

Not true at all. They just quote Randi and his pronouncements, e.g., in his book Flim Flam. In Flim Flam, he gives something like 28 debunking points, if my memory serves me correctly. I had the opportunity to confront Randi at a Parapsychology Association conference with proof in hand, and in tape-recorded interaction he admitted he was wrong on all the points. He even said he would correct them for the upcoming paperback being published by the CSICOP group. (He did not.)

In case one thinks that it was just a case of our opinions vs. his opinions, we chose for the list of incorrect points only those that could be independently verified. Examples: He said that in our Nature paper we verified Geller's metal-bending. Go to the paper, and you see that we said we were not able to obtain evidence for this. He said that a film of the Geller experiment made at SRI by famed photographer Zev Pressman was

not made by him, but by us and we just put his name on it. We showed up with an affidavit by Pressman saying that indeed he did make the film. Etc., etc.

Hal Puthoff"

And telepathy researcher Rupert Sheldrake caught Randi lying on several instances about him:

<http://www.sheldrake.org/D&C/controversies/randi.html>

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I emailed James Randi to ask for details of this JREF research. He did not reply. He ignored a second request for information too.

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Finally, in regard to CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal), one revealing thing needs to be said. Former CSICOP staff member Dennis Rawlins resigned after finding hard evidence of CSICOP intentionally suppressing its own findings which supported astrology (known as the "file drawer effect") during one of their initial investigations of Michel Gauquelin's statistical research, thus proving the organization's true agenda was simply to discredit/debunk in any way possible rather than to find the truth, in order to appease its subscribers. You can read Rawlins' report "sTARBABY" at <http://cura.free.fr/xv/14starbb.html>. CSICOP has maintained of course, that it was all just a big misunderstanding. But what else do you expect them to say? Mr. Rawlins' findings seem to be very sincere and unambiguous.

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Now, what kind of skepticism or critical thinking is that? Is that the mark of a freethinker or truth seeker? I don't think so.

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For those of you who have followed the work of Randi, Shermer or CSICOP, ask yourself this: Have you ever seen them criticize anything of the establishment, including crimes, murders, lies, conspiracies, evil plots, etc?

I'll bet not.

Consider the following documented facts and let me ask you:

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The ability to independently assess all sides, including your own, is the mark of a true freethinking at a higher level of consciousness. These folks clearly do not fit the bill.

You gotta remember that "actions speak louder than words". Anyone can claim to be a skeptic or critical freethinker. But if their ACTIONS do not show the hallmark of one, then they aren't. And by their actions, the Randis, Shermers and CSICOPers aren't.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Argument # 30: The James Randi Million Dollar Psychic Challenge argument

In case you don't know, James Randi is the most celebrated of the organized skeptics who founded the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF). Skilled and versed in the art of stage magic, Mr. Randi claims to be better able to detect fraud and trickery from psychics and mediums better than scientists can. He gives speeches attempting to "educate" (or brainwash rather, in my view) the public about psychics and paranormal phenomena, which he claims is all deception or self-delusion. He has written books such as *An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural* and *Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions*, made a PBS documentary called "Secrets of the Psychics", attacked the reputation of psychics and healers such as Israeli-born spoon bender Uri Geller, debated with psychics on CNN's Larry King Live, etc.

In the original version of this book back in 2001, I decided not to address this argument

because I didn't like to create whole arguments against specific individuals. However, at this point the infamous James Randi and his supporters have made it practically unavoidable. He is so deeply publicly involved in debunking parapsychology in the media, that to ignore him would be tantamount to ignoring Darth Vader in Star Wars. Paranormal debunkers now commonly use Randi's psychic challenge to argue that there are no genuine paranormal or psychic abilities, else they would apply for the challenge and win. Therefore, in this new edition of this book, I've had to add a section on it as it is one of the most often mentioned arguments by organized skeptics.

There are many obvious problems with this argument of course, since one magician with an axe to grind and hosting a publicity stunt does not debunk all the paranormal experiences in the world. They still happen everyday to people all over the world. Randi's critics claim is mostly a publicity stunt for his career due to the fact that 1) Randi is extremely selective in who he tests, preferring to only test famous names to boost his own career, and that 2) there are many applicants who received no response after applying. Plus, based on numerous testimonials from challenge applicants and para-researchers, there is much circumstantial evidence that Randi is not that honest, for he has used plenty of deceptive and dishonest tactics in the past. There are many reports and analyses of him that indicate this and damage his credibility. I've provided a list of them below so you can research them yourself.

The Myth of the Randi Challenge by the Daily Grail, points out a list of events that show how Randi keeps the challenge unwon by raising the bar to impossible and unreasonable standards, and using other dishonest sleight-of-hand tactics.

Randi Backs out of Challenge with Homeopath George Vitalhoukas, reneging on a long term agreement. I guess when someone's about to win, he gets scared and finds excuses not to go through with it.

The Randi Challenge – A thorough analysis by Michael Prescott

Randi caught lying on several assertions by telepathy researcher Rupert Sheldrake

Victor Zammit, a lawyer who presents the case for the afterlife, has a critique and counter to the Randi Challenge at: <http://www.victorzammit.com/skeptics/reward.html>
His video exposing the Randi Challenge is here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_91wrhZhTFE

My friend Michael Goodspeed recently also wrote a great article detailing the hypocrisy of Randi and his challenge, which you can read at <http://www.rense.com/general50/james.htm>.

Psychic Challenge - An article challenging James Randi to live up to his repeated assertion that if adequate evidence of a paranormal reality could be demonstrated to him, he would be happy to acknowledge it and pay the one million dollar prize to the claimant. Includes accounts of Randi's shortcomings and mistakes. (You can read Randi's response to it at: <http://www.randi.org/jr/091903.html>)

Flim-Flam Flummery: A Skeptical Look at James Randi - A comprehensive article by Michael Prescott which investigates, analyzes and exposes many errors and mistakes Randi made in his book Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions. Includes a response by Randi, followed by Prescott's rebuttal and analysis of the disputed issues.

Montague Keen's challenges to Mr. Randi to live up to his pledges and promises regarding the million dollar challenge:

<http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/keen/randi.htm>

<http://www.survivalafterdeath.org.uk/articles/keen/jamesrandi.htm>

James Randi's Funding? - On Jeff Rense, Michael Roll discusses radio shows where Randi was defeated and shamed in debate against qualified scientists, but which didn't reach the public, possibly due to Randi's doing.

The Problem with James Randi - An article by Skylaire Alfvengren on the Jeff Rense site about where Randi and his group fails.

Darryl Sloan, a balanced freethinker and telekinesis researcher with a large following on YouTube, explains in this video why faith in the Randi Challenge is irrational:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujqVwcZg_mA (his channel contains many high quality well thought-out videos: <http://www.youtube.com/darrylsloan>)

A cursory look at Randi's articles on his website www.randi.org will reveal to any objective observer that although this man is very good at playing intellectual gymnastics in his commentaries and debates. He will do whatever it takes to win, even committing foul play. There is no question that his mind is made up and that he has an axe to

grind.

In addition, Randi seems to have a tendency to distort facts for his purposes. For instance, Harold Puthoff, a researcher at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) which is famous for conducting experiments on remote viewing and Uri Geller's psychic abilities, told me in an email:

"<< All the skeptics I've debated said that the SRI tests were totally discredited and debunked already. Is this true? >>

Not true at all. They just quote Randi and his pronouncements, e.g., in his book Flim Flam. In Flim Flam, he gives something like 28 debunking points, if my memory serves me correctly. I had the opportunity to confront Randi at a Parapsychology Association conference with proof in hand, and in tape-recorded interaction he admitted he was wrong on all the points. He even said he would correct them for the upcoming paperback being published by the CSICOP group. (He did not.)

In case one thinks that it was just a case of our opinions vs. his opinions, we chose for the list of incorrect points only those that could be independently verified. Examples: He said that in our Nature paper we verified Geller's metal-bending. Go to the paper, and you see that we said we were not able to obtain evidence for this. He said that a film of the Geller experiment made at SRI by famed photographer Zev Pressman was not made by him, but by us and we just put his name on it. We showed up with an affidavit by Pressman saying that indeed he did make the film. Etc., etc.

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Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

Conclusion

As we have seen, these pseudoskeptics are fundamentalist defenders of orthodoxy, not true skeptics, open minded inquirers or objective truth seekers. They exhibit the following consistent traits:

PseudoSkeptics / Closed-Minded Skeptics

Does not ask questions to try to understand new things, but judges them by whether they fit into the established order

Applies "critical thinking" only to that which opposes the status quo, but never to the status quo itself

Carries a fixed set of unchanging beliefs which all data must conform to

Are not interested in truth, evidence or facts, only in defending the views of establishment

Cannot think in terms of possibilities, but views their own fixed viewpoints as constant

Are willing to lie and deceive to preserve establishment views, which are their true master

Automatically dismisses and denies all information that contradicts materialism and orthodoxy

Is judgmental and quick to draw conclusions about things they know little or nothing about

Scoffs and ridicules what they oppose instead of using objective unbiased analysis and examination

Insists that everything unknown and unexplained must have a conventional materialistic

explanation

Uses semantics and word games with their own rules of logic to try to win arguments
Are unable to adapt their paradigms to new evidence but instead denies data which doesn't fit into them

When all conventional explanations for a phenomenon are ruled out, are not able to accept paranormal ones

They are materialist fanatics, driven by dogmatic beliefs and views that are fixed, which they seek to proselytize to the world, such as:

- The paranormal is impossible and ALWAYS disproven
- Everything unexplained or unknown MUST have a natural materialistic explanation
- If someone makes a paranormal claim, they MUST be wrong
- ONLY natural reductionist explanations are acceptable
- If mainstream science doesn't understand or accept something, then it MUST be false or doesn't exist.

Furthermore, they've hijacked the term skeptic for themselves and twisted it to mean the opposite of what it really means. It's a deceptive form of cloak and dagger mind control on the mass public, a disinformation campaign perhaps.

What we know for sure is that their arguments are subjective statements of belief designed to support a priori assumptions, rather than to seek truth. Their style of logic is designed to refute purely on philosophical grounds rather than factual grounds, which have nothing to do with rationality or reason. In fact, like fundamentalist religion, they are rigid and closed-minded to anything new or contrary, no matter how much evidence there is to support it. They are not truth seekers nor do they care about evidence or facts. All they do is ridicule and deny. Though they may claim to be open minded, their actions and behaviors reveal them to be anything but. And as you know, when one's words and actions contradict each other, the latter speaks louder.

The true skeptic should be skeptical of his own beliefs as well as of others. But these pseudoskeptics aren't. Instead they are cynics who are unable to see the flaws and

limitations in their own views. Consciousness and NDE expert Greg Stone, author of *Under the Tree*, and a member of my discussion list, sums up the closed-minded skeptics' problem in an interesting way:

"You see the subjective evaluation of a skeptic holds less weight than the subjective direct observation of the experiencer. What is needed, and sorely missing, is a real understanding of the nature and factors of subjective knowledge. Without this all such discussions will be foolhardy. The skeptic continually fails to understand and admit that he works on a subjective basis. And he seems mystified when someone accepts someone's direct observation over the skeptic's subjective evaluation."

Richard Milton of the Alternative Science website who has faced scorn and derision from skeptics himself, writes:

<http://www.alternativescience.com/skepticism.htm>

"There is no more honourable word in the scientific lexicon than that of 'skeptic' -- one who sincerely seeks after truth and who has the courage to rebut scientific myths and false beliefs with empirical data and sound logic.....

But in recent decades, 'skeptic' has come to mean something else. It has come to mean the adoption of an attitude of scorn and derision towards any kind of anomalous data that contradicts current scientific beliefs, and the adoption of an air of condescension and superiority towards those who venture to investigate or write about anomalous phenomena.....

And the 'skeptics' who censor and ridicule in the name of science, whether they know it or not, are the agents not of knowledge but of pseudoscience.

Science does not need vigilantes to guard its gates. Science has been successful because good science drives out bad and because an ounce of experiment is worth any amount of scientific authority."

And former Naval Scientist Eldon Byrd, who tested spoon bender Uri Geller, rightly states:

"What major contribution has any skeptic made to the betterment of humankind? How many Mother Teresa's have they produced? How many great scientific discoveries have they made? Many of them are like movie critics--useless and usually wrong."

He was right of course. As someone pointed out, skeptics have contributed nothing for science, just like music critics have contributed nothing to the music genre. After all, no one ever erects a monument to a critic.

Novelist and blogger Michael Prescott described the pseudoskeptics very eloquently in his essay "Why I Am Not A Skeptic"

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/New/Examskeptics/Prescott_skeptic.html

"Their penchant for denigrating and discrediting the paranormal is not simply a tic of the personality, but the ineluctable consequence of a certain fundamental view of life, mind, and the cosmos.

Unfortunately, people with a powerful personal agenda do not make the best skeptics - at least not if skepticism is understood as the exercise of unbiased objectivity.

Self-doubt - or at least the admission of same - is not characteristic of the skeptic, who prefers to radiate an aura of unshakable assurance. To admit any doubt is to cede territory to the forces of unreason - the primordial enemy, which, as we have seen, must be resisted by any means.

And here we come to what is, as I see it, the real problem with skeptics. They wish, above all, to be certain - and when reality doesn't oblige them by offering clear-cut answers, they turn away from reality and seek refuge in pre-existing theory.

They oversimplify history as a battle between good and evil, and miss its complexities

and subtleties. They resist modern developments in science and cling to outdated, nineteenth century conceptions. They jump to prearranged conclusions and shut their eyes - and their minds - to anomalous data and alternative explanations.

In their quest to prove themselves right, they lose sight of the ambiguities and paradoxes of life. In their desire to be safe and sure, they turn away from anything interesting and new.

They are creatures of comfort and routine, not explorers. They cannot think outside the box. They will, in fact, deny that there is or ever could be anything outside the box - and they'll heap scorn on anyone who suggests otherwise. They'll call names, cry fraud, and holler that civilization is in danger and the barbarians are at the gates. They'll do anything, really - except examine their own assumptions with a remotely critical eye.

And that's why I'm not a skeptic.”

One might wonder why these closed-minded debunkers do what they do, and what motivates them, for it certainly isn't truth. Articles have been written which speculate about this (see the list of links below), but we can't really generalize here and apply one explanation to them all. One explanation though, seems to ring true as a factor. Brian Zeiler writes in his article *The Logical Trickery of the UFO Skeptic*:

<http://www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc265.htm>

“Skeptics are mostly scientists, but that certainly doesn't mean they behave scientifically, as has been explained. Their behavior stems partially from their distaste for public opinions that contradict the consensus of the scientific community. When a public consensus does contradict the scientific opinion, the scientists will mount a public campaign to discredit this opinion, because such an opinion undermines the role of the scientist in society as the appointed knowledge-seeker and truth-gatherer. What good are scientists if mankind will only insist on believing in warm, fuzzy superstitions anyway? So, these scientists who are guilty of the logical infractions exposed in this essay are so consumed with the presumed validity of their opinions that, like a zealous religious fanatic, they must convert the masses to the side of truth in order to salvage their own self-image.”

Here is another explanation from the vantage point of a mystic named FaithRada:

"Of course the best way to know phenomena such as Clairvoyance, mental telepathy and Astral travel etc., is to have the direct validating experience for one's self.

Truly? if I were a skeptic... and I was one, that is the ONLY way to really Know. What good is belief OR disbelief here? One SHOULD hold out for actual Direct Experience before any judgment is passed. In fact... repeated, validated incidences are often necessary, to rid the mind of its blocks... depending on the resistance one holds for the idea of an expanded reality in the first place.

Which brings me to the main point why more ardent skeptics/cynics always insist these events MUST BE frauds and/or ignorant misunderstandings. FEAR Fear in the sense that if these events are recognized as valid then their whole world .. based on certain laws of logic and the way this world SEEMS to work ..would be destroyed. So, better not to look too deeply. they LIKE their world the way THEY have come to understand it... neat, orderly, dependable... But the question begs... Who's sense of law and order, orderliness and dependability? To the finite mind there is always chaos lurking around the bend. To the infinite mind there is no chaos at all.... but that is a huge leap for the individual mind to take. The contracted mind creates a chasm and then fears it will fall into it. Amazing yes?

Everything these "hard core" skeptics/cynics have based their reality on, as to what IS real, indeed.. who THEY even ARE... would suddenly be invalidated and the reality they base their very existence on would suddenly have no meaning. This is to be avoided at all cost... and so they make sure ALL claims are fraudulent or misunderstood by duped minds. This is their protection mode and they are unlikely to be shaken from it. Instead they need an "inner" shift.. which will allow them to recognize a higher order of things. No shift? No understanding.

After a while, for those who CAN allow a shift, a new stability does come if they can survive the mental fall.. but in the moment.. the universe would appear to be beyond chaotic. They are like babies in the womb.. not yet quite ready for a whole NEW reality.

& & &

When one begins to "recognize" that their visions are indeed of valid "future" events,

and so TimeandSpace are NOT exactly the "set in stone" reality they thought them to be... it can initially throw one into a great turmoil... especially if they had assumed such events were... unlikely to be possible... before this. *note (if a mind believes something to be indeed impossible.. then they will not receive the validating experiences which are crucial to this knowing since their mind is now actively censoring it from them, at their request.)

The more one believes these realities to be improbable, the more turmoil and trauma they will experience... until the mind simply blocks it all out. This is why no matter how much evidence is trotted out... it is like a blind man looking at the moon... they will experience nothing... they are simply not able to because of their current mind set of disbelief."

Yet here is still a more simpler speculation on what motivates these pseudoskeptics, from one of my readers:

"I sometimes wonder if the debunker or pseudoskeptical mentality results from what might be termed the "Santa Claus Syndrome." That is, these debunkers were so traumatized in their youth by finding out there was no Santa Claus that they made up their minds then that they would never again be duped by anyone. They figured that if they were duped by their parents on Santa Claus they must have also been duped on God. They became polarized in their thinking, i.e., "From now on, I have to see it to believe it," and got stuck in that paradigm. Thus, the tendency for debunkers to throw out the Santa Claus analogy is a result of their own childhood trauma at learning there is no Santa Claus. Perhaps there was some unusual trust issue with their parents that prompted the syndrome. It would be interesting if someone could research this, but it would be an impossible project because they wouldn't admit to certain shortcomings. They would understand where the study was going and attempt to skew it toward the intelligent and rational explanation."

Nevertheless, perhaps there is yet hope for pseudoskeptics and debunkers. Recently, a famous career skeptic named Susan Blackmore, author of *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences* conceded that her prior conclusions about the non-existence of psi were unwarranted after all. This is amazing because career skeptics in general never like to admit to being wrong. After all, they have their career and self-pride among their colleagues riding on their back to give it all up just to end up being wrong. Therefore, her admission is very brave and admirable. And the way she explains her concession is so refreshingly honest, that all skeptics, both open-minded and closed-minded,

should learn from it and take heed. In an article for the Skeptical Inquirer, she writes:

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/anomalistics/skeptic_research.htm

“How could I weigh my own results against the results of other people, bearing in mind that mine tended to be negative ones while everyone else’s tended to be positive ones? I had to find some kind of balance here. At one extreme I could not just believe my own results and ignore everyone else’s.... At the other extreme I could not believe everyone else’s results and ignore my own. That would be even more pointless. There would have been no point in all those years of experiments if I didn’t take my own results seriously.” (emphasis added)

In another article she wrote:

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/anomalistics/skeptic_research.htm

“The other major challenge to the skeptic’s position is, of course, the fact that opposing positive evidence exists in the parapsychological literature. I couldn’t dismiss it all. This raises an interesting question: Just how much weight can you or should you give the results of your own experiments over those of other people? On the one hand, your own should carry more weight, since you know exactly how they were done... On the other hand, science is necessarily a collective enterprise.... So I couldn’t use my own failures as justifiable evidence that psi does not exist. I had to consider everyone else’s success.”

“At last, I’ve done it. I’ve thrown in the towel.

Come to think of it, I feel slightly sad. It was just over thirty years ago that I had the dramatic out-of-body experience that convinced me of the reality of psychic phenomena... Just a few years of careful experiments changed all that. I found no psychic phenomena... I became a sceptic.(emphasis added).

So why didn’t I give up then? There are lots of bad reasons. Admitting you are wrong is

always hard, even though it's a skill every scientist needs to learn. And starting again as a baby in a new field is a daunting prospect. So is losing all the status and power of being an expert. I have to confess I enjoyed my hard-won knowledge.

...None of it ever gets anywhere. That's a good enough reason for leaving.

But perhaps the real reason is that I am just too tired - and tired above all of working to maintain an open mind. I couldn't dismiss all those extraordinary claims out of hand. After all, they just might be true..."

Closed-minded skeptics should pay close attention to the underlined parts above. They reflect how a true skeptic should think.

Now let me clarify again that I am not some gullible believer who believes in every wacky item under the umbrella term "the paranormal" out there, such as crystals, channeling, Loch Ness Monster, Bermuda Triangle, etc. Most of these paranormal mysteries lack good incontrovertible evidence, and their evidence is scanty and ambiguous to make any judgments. And some of course, have too much damaging evidence against them that they are hardly worth investigating anymore. Others are simply too controversial to know either way.

Therefore, it was never my intention to be a defender for all paranormal phenomena in general, only in the proposition that they should be considered. In fact, I am very skeptical myself, and not quick to believe something unless I have good reasons to. I am very cautious by nature and do not believe everything I hear, contrary to what skeptics often charge me with. My position is that the evidence for any paranormal phenomenon should be **CONSIDERED** and **INVESTIGATED** (with an attitude of searching for the truth, not with an agenda) rather than rejected automatically because it doesn't fit in with convention. Now, I do not claim to have the answers to all the paranormal mysteries either. No one does. However, based on my experience, research, and the overwhelming totality of anecdotal reports (majority of the world in fact), here are my conclusions.

1) The evidence presented in this book refutes the main skeptical arguments demonstrates that at least some kind of metaphysical reality exists. The nature and scope of that is yet to be discovered, as well as the implications. We have only begun to discover its existence through quantum physics, scientific experiments, new research into mind/body connections, etc.

2) The overwhelming anecdotal evidence from at least half the world, discoveries in quantum physics, credible scientific experiments, and new research into mind/body connections indicate that at least certain phenomenon are real in the sense that they have actual unimagined effects – telepathy, ESP, psychic abilities in general, and ghosts. The widespread anecdotal evidence for these phenomena alone indicates that statistically they are very likely to point to something real. In other words, there is something to them beside hallucination, fraud, or misperception.

Similarly, as one man on a paranormal list concluded, one does not have to have mystical experiences to conclude that something real is going on here:

“One additional thought about waiting for a mystical experience to awaken oneself. As I said, it's not all that easy for some of us. There are many who might wait and wait and never have one. I have had a few marginal mystical experiences, but nothing that would have changed my thinking had I been a closed-minded skeptic, debunker, pseudoskeptic, scientific fundamentalist, whatever name we choose to give to such a person. I have never had a near-death experience, but I consider myself a "vicarious experiencer," as I have read enough accounts of NDEs to conclude that they are not all hallucinations. As a number of psychical researchers have said, no one case is strong enough to convince them; rather, it is the cumulative evidence. That's why I put together the 30 or so quotations of distinguished scientists and scholars in the appendix at the end of my book. A person can read the reports of these various men over time, but one tends to forget many of them, although she may very well bury them in the subconscious. I believe seeing them all in one reading might impact some true skeptics. It's one thing to say a particular researcher might have been duped by a particular medium at a particular time, quite another to read the accounts of 30 or more and conclude that they were all duped over and over again. Many of the researchers I've quoted spent years investigating mediums and sat with dozens of them.

Bottom line: It would be great if we could all have mystical experiences, Kundalini awakenings, whatever, but the best most of us can do is become "vicarious

experiencers.”“

Now, if we are right, then there is the question of what to do with these discoveries and how to apply it to our lives. Well that is the next step, and it is what truth seekers and open-minded researchers think and ponder about.

One independent film has come out lately though, which attempts to address that - What the bleep do we know? The film addresses the latest discoveries in quantum physics and the power of our thoughts. Playing in several states, people have been seeing it multiple times and it has been receiving standing ovations at its showings. One of its most important messages is that contrary to what most people think, thoughts are not harmless. They do not just pass through your head and then are gone. Rather, they help slowly program your subconscious mind and instincts, creating instincts that make you do things without knowing why, often resulting in control dramas of all kinds which are like loop programs that repeat itself. Check its website for more info (<http://www.whatthebleep.com>) or enter the film title on YouTube to watch it.

For most paranormal phenomena, the jury is still out, and the evidence is controversial and unclear. However, the evidence for telepathy and ghosts, for instance, is very strong when you combine the scientific evidence and overwhelming widespread anecdotal evidence throughout history. Therefore, they are very likely to be real and in all likelihood there is something to it other than fraud, delusion, mistake or misperception.

According to Lew Paz, author of Pushing Ultimates, there is a safe middle ground between science and mysticism that should benefit both sides in their search for truth:

“All scientists have a responsibility to broaden their comprehension of the human situation. An astute skepticism is necessary in the pursuit of truth, but it must be flexible and open to varied possibilities, unhampered by a narrow materialistic orientation. Despite the excessive naivety rife within the New Age movement, the intelligent scientist can't toss the entire 5,000 year history of mysticism aside, for a century of valid empirical research clearly reveals deeper dimensions of human existence do exist.

Science can never provide us with a total grasp of existence, and any "theory of everything" based on empirical evidence alone would not be all encompassing. The intuitive insights of poets, the visions of mystics and saints, the explorations of shamans, plus the psychological and psychedelic research of different fields of science, certainly count in any attempt at total description. But, though science cannot provide us with an understanding of the whole, it can assist us in cultivating a greater radius of comprehension. Though not the royal road to wisdom many have thought it to be, science is a fine tool and an important avenue toward self-knowledge and overall knowledge of our existential-cosmic situation. Unfortunately, far too many use science to build a bulwark against the insights brought forth by explorations of the mind's archetypal depths and transcendent dimensions. Scientists and skeptics of materialistic persuasion tend toward a bias similar to religious fundamentalists zealously defending their belief system."

After all, all it takes to prove the existence of something is one real case, as William James points out,

"If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn't seek to prove that no crows are; it is enough to prove one single crow to be white."

--William James

Regardless of your belief about the paranormal, the important thing is to keep an open mind and not rush to judgments based on our personal world views.

"Doubt everything or believe everything: these are two equally convenient strategies. With either we dispense with the need for reflection." - Henri Poincare

Against critics and skeptics, we must follow our conscience, heart, and intuition. After all, as Martin Caidin reminds us:

"What you believe someone else can or can't do hasn't got beans with the doing. Or lack of doing. Just go back through your history books and you'll discover that just about everything you take for granted today in your daily lives was absolutely impossible not

so many years ago." - Martin Caidin

The pseudoskeptics and scoffers should heed the words of the progressive researcher Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, a current pioneer in psi research with groundbreaking discoveries, who says in the introduction of his book *The Sense of Being Stared At*:

"I believe it is more scientific to explore phenomena we do not understand than to pretend they do not exist. I also believe it is less frightening to recognize that the seventh sense is part of our biological nature, shared with many other animal species, than to treat it as weird or supernatural."

The problem is that these phenomena, even if real, don't fit into conventional paradigms of reality. Therefore, what we need to do is update our beliefs and world views to include these facts and find new paradigms that account for them. In the meantime, we should keep in mind that the beauty of mysteries and paranormal phenomena lies not in finding the answers to every question, but in the awe and appreciation we have for them. Therein lies the great lesson that there is always "more to learn" and "something better out there".

As to expanding ourselves beyond our own paradigms, Mr. Paz states beautifully:

"The intelligent, open, and questioning mind does not have to remain limited to a barren materialistic orientation of reality, or succumb to the delusions of religion or overly simplified mysticism. Millions among us can become the companions of the great sages, true poets, profound musicians, gifted artists, philosophers, and scientists of real merit. We can travel with those who know that the brain's magnificent electro-chemical surge of embodied consciousness, in its dynamic ferment, transcends its own activity, igniting frequencies that resonate with dimensions far beyond what we are ordinarily aware of. To know yourself is to know of these things, for such exploration expands our consciousness, enriches our minds, and makes us capable of moving ever nearer to the essential truth of our astonishing existence."

There is a new paradigm now in science and quantum physics called the Holographic Paradigm which explains and allows for paranormal phenomena to exist. You can read

about it in one of my favorite books, The Holographic Universe by Michael Talbot, or right now in this thought-provoking summary by David S. Walonick, Ph.D. here:

https://www.debunkingskeptics.com/Holographic_Reality.htm

Let me close on this with some eloquent profound quotes for you to ponder.

"Let the mind be enlarged... to the grandeur of the mysteries, and not the mysteries contracted to the narrowness of the mind" - Francis Bacon

"Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't." - Mark Twain

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science." - Albert Einstein

"It is entirely possible that behind the perception of our senses, worlds are hidden of which we are unaware." – Albert Einstein

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes." - Marcel Proust, French novelist

"We all go on the same search,
looking to solve the same old mystery.
We will not, of course, ever solve it.
We will finally inhabit the Mystery."

- Ray Bradbury, SF writer.

And finally, Einstein says it all with:

"Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world. All knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it."

- Albert Einstein

Thank you for reading my book. Comments can be sent to me at scepcop@debunkingskeptics.com or posted in my forum at: <https://www.debunkingskeptics.com/forum/index.php>

Sincerely,

Winston Wu

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[Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers](#)

[New Developments and Research](#)

[Skeptiko Podcasts](#) – A new podcast show that explores controversial science with leading researchers and their critics. Hailed in paranormal circles as very good at getting to the heart of the issues.

[Interview with Dean Radin](#), author of *The Conscious Universe* – Very insightful and revealing from an expert insider in psi research.

[Afterlife Research Presented at UN Symposium](#) – A group of MD's headed by Dr. Sam Parnia announces to a UN Symposium that there is a possibility of life after death because they have seen patients with full blown NDE's while their brain was on a flat EEG line.

Randi Backs out of Challenge with Homeopath George Vithoulkas – Further confirmation that the Challenge is a mere publicity stunt, not a serious investigation.

Dr. Michael Persinger, Neuroscientist, discovers telepathy in his magnetic field experiments

Neuroscientist Dr. Michael Persinger of Ontario University, hailed by pseudoskeptics for his “God helmet” experiments that seem to debunk NDE’s being evidence of an afterlife, has announced the existence of telepathy to be an established proven fact. His controlled experiments involving two subjects in separate rooms reacting to stimuli at the same time has produced confirmatory results. Dr. Persinger says that all we know for sure is that thoughts are somehow capable of traveling outside of the mind through space and matter, but we don’t know how or why. He speculates that the Earth has some kind of magnetic field, which animals, fish and bird flocks use as a guidance system - that somehow human consciousness may be linked to.

Here is an interview with Dr. Persinger on Skeptiko:

<http://www.skeptiko.com/michael-persinger-discovers-telepathic-link/>

Here is a video of a public presentation by Dr. Persinger where he announces his discovery of telepathy and the implications of it:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9I6VPpDublg>

Dr. Rupert Sheldrake’s groundbreaking new research and findings into telepathy

Dr. Rupert Sheldrake, a British biologist, has been doing some incredible widely

acclaimed groundbreaking experimental research involving telepathy in humans, pets, and plants. His well-conducted experiments demonstrate beyond a doubt that telepathy is real, and has developed a theory involving "morphic resonance" to explain the phenomenon. You can see his website which is both groundbreaking and compelling, at <http://www.sheldrake.org>. His papers describing his experiments with people, animals, and plants can also be viewed at: <http://www.sheldrake.org/papers/>. He has also come out with a series of compelling books on his findings, such as *The Sense of Being Stared At* and *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home*. You can see a list of his books at: <http://www.sheldrake.org/books/index.html>.

Recently, Dr. Sheldrake participated in a live public debate in London versus Professor Lewis Wolpert. The results were very favorable to Sheldrake's findings, and the majority of the audience were convinced by Dr. Sheldrake's arguments regarding his research and findings which validated the existence of telepathy. You can listen to the debate that took place online at this link: http://www.sheldrake.org/controversies/telepathy_tape.html. Nature, the science journal, reported on this debate with highly favorable reviews:

"Telepathy debate hits London
Audience charmed by the paranormal.

Many people believe there is evidence of the power of the mind. Scientists tend to steer clear of public debates with advocates of the paranormal. And judging from the response of a London audience to a rare example of such a head-to-head conflict last week, they are wise to do so. Lewis Wolpert, a developmental biologist at University College London, made the case against the existence of telepathy at a debate at the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in London on 15 January. Rupert Sheldrake, a former biochemist and plant physiologist at the University of Cambridge who has taken up parapsychology, argued in its favour. And most of the 200-strong audience seemed to agree with him. Wolpert is one of Britain's best-known public spokesmen for science. But few members of the audience seemed to be swayed by his arguments.

Sheldrake, who moved beyond the scientific pale in the early 1980s by claiming that ideas and forms can spread by a mysterious force he called morphic resonance, kicked off the debate. He presented the results of tests of extrasensory perception, together with his own research on whether people know who is going to phone or e-mail them, on whether dogs know when their owners are coming home, and on the allegedly telepathic bond between a New York woman and her parrot. "Billions of perfectly rational people believe that they have had these experiences," he said.

An open mind is a very bad thing - everything falls out - Lewis Wolpert, University College London

Wolpert countered that telepathy was "pathological science", based on tiny, unrepeatable effects backed up by fantastic theories and an ad hoc response to criticism. "The blunt fact is that there's no persuasive evidence for it," he said.

For Ann Blaber, who works in children's music and was undecided on the subject, Sheldrake was the more convincing. "You can't just dismiss all the evidence for telepathy out of hand," she said. Her view was reflected by many in the audience, who variously accused Wolpert of "not knowing the evidence" and being "unscientific". In staging the debate, the RSA joins a growing list of London organizations taking a novel approach to science communication¹. "We want to provide a platform for controversial subjects," says Liz Winder, head of lectures at the RSA.

References

1. Giles, J. Museum breaks mould in attempts to lure reluctant visitors *Nature*, 426, 6, doi:10.1038/426006a (2003). [Article]

Report from *Nature* 22nd January 2004 Telepathy Debate by John Whitfield"

Dr. Sheldrake caught Randi lying about him in several instances, explained in his account [here](#).

My interview on Ghostly Talk

I was interviewed on Ghostly Talk Radio about this book in 2004 and 2009. The shows went very well and we all had great rapport. You can listen to the interviews which are archived on my Interview page [here](https://www.debunkingskeptics.com/interviews.php):
<https://www.debunkingskeptics.com/interviews.php>

Susan Blackmore, a famous skeptic, recants her stance on NDE's

Dr. Susan Blackmore, a proponent of the anti-spirit hypothesis for NDE's, and author of the book *Dying to Live: Near-Death Experiences* (which was critiqued by Greg Stone on my list in his article *Critique of Susan Blackmore's Dying to Live*) has recently confessed that her prior conclusions about the probability of psi and metaphysical consciousness

existing being close to none, were not as conclusive as she thought. And that she was NOT justified in ruling out psi after all. Therefore, she has taken an honest “I don’t know” stance and left the issue at that. This is quite amazing, because very few career skeptics ever make such admissions to being wrong, both for reasons of human pride and the career status they’ve built up among their colleagues. Here are some relevant parts of the story, which includes some quotes from Blackmore herself.

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/anomalistics/skeptic_research.htm

The same journal issue also includes a response by Blackmore to Berger’s critique, in which Blackmore conceded “I agree that one cannot draw conclusions about the reality of psi based on these experiments.” Near the end of his critique Berger had written “During my aborted meta-analysis of Blackmore’s published work, I was struck by patterns in the data suggestive of the operation of psi.... Without a serious meta-analysis of the original unpublished source material, complete with weighting for flaws...the issue of whether the Blackmore experiments show evidence for psi cannot be resolved.” Presumably eager to nip this embarrassment in the bud, Blackmore hastened to say “I am glad to be able to agree with his final conclusion - ‘that drawing any conclusion, positive or negative, about the reality of psi that are based on the Blackmore psi experiments must be considered unwarranted.’”

It is interesting to examine Blackmore’s writings before and after Berger’s critique. Two years earlier, in an article for the *Skeptical Inquirer* entitled “The Elusive Open Mind: Ten Years of Negative Research in Parapsychology” she wrote:

“How could I weigh my own results against the results of other people, bearing in mind that mine tended to be negative ones while everyone else’s tended to be positive ones? I had to find some kind of balance here. At one extreme I could not just believe my own results and ignore everyone else’s.... At the other extreme I could not believe everyone else’s results and ignore my own. That would be even more pointless. There would have been no point in all those years of experiments if I didn’t take my own results seriously.” (emphasis added)

In another article written at about the same time she wrote:

“The other major challenge to the skeptic’s position is, of course, the fact that opposing positive evidence exists in the parapsychological literature. I couldn’t dismiss it all. This raises an interesting question: Just how much weight can you or should you give the results of your own experiments over those of other people? On the one hand, your own should carry more weight, since you know exactly how they were done... On the other hand, science is necessarily a collective enterprise.... So I couldn’t use my own failures as justifiable evidence that psi does not exist. I had to consider everyone else’s success.

I asked myself a thousand times, as I ask the reader now: Is there a right conclusion?

The only answer I can give, after ten years of intensive research in parapsychology, is that I don’t know.”

Although after Berger’s critique Blackmore was willing to concede in an academic journal that “I agree that one cannot draw conclusions about the reality of psi based on these experiments”, her writings in the popular press have not reflected this admission. Commenting on the ganzfeld experiments in a newspaper article in 1996, she wrote:

“My own conclusion is biased by my own personal experience. I tried my first ganzfeld experiment in 1978, when the procedure was new.... Of course the new auto-ganzfeld results are even better. Why should I doubt them because of events in the past? The problem is that my personal experience conflicts with the successes I read about in the literature and I cannot ignore either side. The only honest reaction is to say “I don’t know”.”

Wouldn’t a more honest reaction be for Blackmore to admit in the popular press that “one cannot draw conclusions about the reality of psi” based on her own experiments, and that a scientific opinion should be based only upon a critical evaluation of other peoples’ published works?

But perhaps this is asking too much. After all, Blackmore pursued a PhD in parapsychology in order to become a “famous parapsychologist”. Having failed to

produce research supporting the psi hypothesis, she evidently decided to try to make a name for herself by attacking the psi hypothesis, which must at the time have seemed to be an easy target. Apparently, though, in a recent article she claims to have given up. "At last, I've done it. I've thrown in the towel", she wrote.

"Come to think of it, I feel slightly sad. It was just over thirty years ago that I had the dramatic out-of-body experience that convinced me of the reality of psychic phenomena... Just a few years of careful experiments changed all that. I found no psychic phenomena... I became a sceptic.(emphasis added).

So why didn't I give up then? There are lots of bad reasons. Admitting you are wrong is always hard, even though it's a skill every scientist needs to learn. And starting again as a baby in a new field is a daunting prospect. So is losing all the status and power of being an expert. I have to confess I enjoyed my hard-won knowledge.

...None of it ever gets anywhere. That's a good enough reason for leaving.

But perhaps the real reason is that I am just too tired - and tired above all of working to maintain an open mind. I couldn't dismiss all those extraordinary claims out of hand. After all, they just might be true ..."

We'll miss you, Susan

For details, see the excerpts from the article link below:

<http://www.rense.com/general70/smart.htm>

"Believe it or not," Robert Roy Britt writes in the January 20, 2006 issue of LiveScience, "according to a new study higher education is linked to a greater tendency to believe in ghosts and other paranormal

phenomena."

Even though researchers Bryan Farha at Oklahoma City University and Gary Steward of University of Central Oklahoma admitted that they had expectations of finding contrary results, their poll of college students found that seniors and graduate students were more likely to believe in haunted houses, ghosts, telepathy, spirit channeling and other paranormal phenomena than were freshmen.

Skeptics Confounded

Although the results of the survey are not surprising to long-time researchers in the metaphysical/psychic fields, what is startling is the fact that the poll analysis is published in the January-February issue of The Skeptical Inquirer magazine, the journal of true unbelievers. While the poll may have been conducted with expectations of demonstrating that as students became more educated they dropped questionable beliefs in favor of more skeptical attitudes, The Skeptical Inquirer must be congratulated for publishing results that they really did not wish to find.

Farha's and Steward's survey was based on a nationwide Gallup Poll in 2001 that found younger Americans more likely to believe in the paranormal than older respondents. The results of the Farha/Steward poll discovered that gaining more education was not a guarantee of skepticism or disbelief toward the paranormal. While only 23% of the freshman quizzed professed a belief toward paranormal concepts, the figures rose to 31% for college seniors and 34% for graduate students.

The complete results of the survey may be found in the January-February issue of The Skeptical Inquirer. The percentages are rounded, and I have indicated the Gallup Poll 2001 figures in parenthesis, the Farha/Steward percentages in bold:

Belief in psychic/spiritual healing: 56 (54)

Belief in ESP: 28 (50)

Haunted houses: 40 (42)

Demonic possession: 40 (41)

Ghosts/spirits of the dead: 39 (38)

Telepathy: 24 (36)

Extraterrestrials visited Earth in the past: 17 (33)

Clairvoyance and prophecy: 24 (32)

Communication with the dead: 16 (28)

Astrology: 17 (28)

Witches: 26 (26)

Reincarnation: 14 (25)

Channeling: 10 (15)

It is in the "Not Sure" column that the researchers found that the higher the education level achieved, the more likelihood there was of believing in paranormal dimensions and the possibilities of a broader spectrum of reality.

Belief in psychic/spiritual healing: 26 (19)

Belief in ESP: 39 (20)

Haunted houses: 25 (16)

Demonic possession: 28 (16)

Ghosts/spirits of the dead: 27 (17)

Telepathy: 34 (26)

Extraterrestrials visited Earth in the past: 34 (27)

Clairvoyance and prophecy: 33 (23)

Communication with the dead: 29 (26)

Astrology: 26 (18)

Witches: 19 (15)

Reincarnation: 28 (20)

Channeling: 29 (21)

Why Disbelieve?

Why do skeptics find it so difficult to believe that individuals who achieve a higher education may still maintain a belief in the paranormal? The world of the paranormal is one where effect often precedes cause, where mind often influences matter, where individuals communicate over great distances without physical aids, and where the spiritual essence of those deceased may be seen. Why, especially in an age of new theories embracing quantum physics and other dimensions, should skeptics find it difficult to believe in a world that lies beyond the five senses and the present reach of science?

For those of us who have been researching and writing in the paranormal, UFO, and spiritual fields for many years, the repeated allegation that we and our readers must be undereducated and unaware of the science and technology of our contemporary culture becomes very annoying. As early as 1965, when I was researching ESP: Your Sixth Sense--which, in addition to becoming a popular book became a college and high school text, complete with workbook and study guide--the pioneering work of Dr. Gardner Murphy, Dr. Montague Ullman, Dr. Stanley Krippner, Dr. Henry Margenau, and many others had already demonstrated that contrary to common assumption, intelligence has little connection to paranormal abilities or beliefs. Neither is it the "odd" or poorly adjusted members of society who most often demonstrate high degrees of psychic ability. Quite the contrary appears to be true. Those individuals who are well-adjusted socially and who are possessed of an extraverted rather than an introverted personality are the ones who score consistently higher in ESP tests.

The January 12, 1994 issue of USA Today carried the results of a survey conducted by Jeffrey S. Levin, associate professor at Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, which stated that more than two-thirds of the U.S. population has had at least one mystical experience. Furthermore, Levin said, although only 5% of the population have such experiences often [that's around 15 million people], such mystical encounters "seem to be getting more common with each successive generation." And very interestingly, Levin added, individuals active in mainstream churches or synagogues report fewer mystical experiences than the general population.

The November 1993 issue of the Journal of Abnormal Psychology announced the finds of psychologists at Carleton University of Ottawa, that people who report seeing a UFO or an alien are not any less intelligent or psychologically healthy than other people. Their findings clearly contradicted the previously held notions that people who seemingly have bizarre experiences, such as missing time and communicating with aliens, have "wild imaginations and are easily swayed into believing

the unbelievable."

Dr. Nicholas P. Spanos, who led the study and administered a battery of psychological tests to a large number of UFO experiencers, said that such individuals were not at all "off the wall." On the contrary, he stated, "They tend to be white-collar, relatively well-educated representatives of the middle class."

Becoming More Common

Psychiatrists Colin Ross and Shaun Joshi have affirmed that paranormal experiences have become so common in the general population that "no theory of normal psychology which does not take them into account can be comprehensive."

It may well be that we are turning into a nation of mystics regardless of the frustration of organized science or organized religion. And we might add, a nation of intelligent mystics.

The October 27, 2004 issue of USA Today declared that "a spiritually inclined student is a happier student." According to a national study of students conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California- Los Angeles, being spiritual contributes to one's sense of psychological well-being.

"A high degree of spirituality correlates with high self-esteem and feeling good about the way life is headed," Sarah Hofius wrote of the study that took place at forty-six wide-ranging universities and colleges, encompassing 3,680 third-year students. "The study defines spirituality as desiring to integrate spirituality into one's life, believing that we are all spiritual beings, believing in the sacredness of life and having spiritual experiences."

Another survey that should have offered an enormous amount of proof that one can achieve a higher education and still believe in the paranormal was released on December 20, 2004, revealing that 74% of medical doctors believe that miracles have occurred in the past and 73% believe that miracles can occur today. Sixty-seven percent of the doctors encouraged their patients to pray; 59% admitted that they prayed for their patients.

The national survey, conducted by HCD Research and the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary, polled 1,100 physicians throughout the United States. According to Dr. Alan Mittleman, Director of the Finkelstein Institute, doctors "although presumably more highly educated than their

average patient, are not necessarily more secular or radically different in religious outlook." Perhaps because of their frequent involvement with matters of life and death, medical doctors do not lose their belief in the miraculous as their level of education increases.

A Believing Skeptic

In 2002, the National Science Foundation found that 60% of adults in the United States agreed or strongly agreed that some people possessed psychic powers or extrasensory perception (ESP). In June 2002, the Consumer Analysis Group conducted the most extensive survey ever done in the United Kingdom and revealed that 67% of adults believed in psychic powers and that two out of three surveyed believed in an afterlife.

.....
In my opinion, humankind's one truly essential factor is its spirituality. The artificial concepts to which we have given the designation of sciences are no truer in the ultimate sense than dreams, visions, and inspirations. The quest for absolute proof or objective truth may always be unattainable when it seeks to define and limit the Soul. And I truly believe that one can achieve a high level of education and still maintain a firm belief in the unseen world."

Skeptic Richard Wiseman concedes that remote viewing/ESP has been proven by normal scientific standards

Skeptic Richard Wiseman, a die hard critic of psychic phenomena, has finally conceded that the case for remote viewing and ESP has been proven by standard scientific criteria! For more info, see these blog entries:

<http://deanradin.blogspot.com/2009/09/skeptic-agrees-that-remote-viewing-is.html>

<http://subversivethinking.blogspot.com/2010/04/richard-wiseman-evidence-for-esp-meets.html>

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(NewsTarget) A long tussle concerning the validity of Homeopathy between the world's most famous homeopath and probably the world's most well known 'quackbuster' appears to have come to head in December 2008 after 5 years of to-ing and fro-ing. On the one side is Homeopath George Vithoulkas, whose International Academy for Classical Homeopathy is based on the island of Alonissos in Greece. On the other is American magician and skeptic, James Randi who heads what he calls The James Randi Educational Foundation, based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Vithoulkas and Randi are equally passionate in their diametrically opposed views and an easy meeting of minds was never very likely.

For several years James Randi has had one million dollars on offer to anyone that can demonstrate paranormal or supernatural powers or events. Understandably he has very strict criteria and rules to the challenge, and to date nobody has passed even the preliminary stages of the application process. Various psychics, astrologers, clairvoyants and dowsers have applied over the years. Also listed as failed applicants on his website are practitioners of arts that could redefine the meaning of the word esoteric, such as, 'paranormal urination' and 'internet sex dowsing' and someone called a 'metal visionary'.

Like all members of the skeptic fraternity, Randi is anti alternative medicine. He considers homeopathy to be bogus and classes it as supernatural because homeopaths use remedies diluted beyond Avogadro's constant. These remedies therefore should not, according to conventional science, have any biological effect. Randi has been involved in a few attempts at debunking homeopathy over the years, and is one of it's fiercest critics.

A group of homeopaths led by the renowned Greek homeopath George Vithoulkas began the process of attempting to win Randi's one million dollars in 2003. Vithoulkas was largely responsible for the resurgence of interest in classical homeopathy in the 1970s and 1980s . He had been upset by what he considered to be badly constructed

experiments previously carried out in the hope of demonstrating the validity of Homeopathy. One of these failed experiments, involving James Randi, was broadcast on BBC television in 2003. It was one of the main impetuses behind Vithoulkas` decision to devote his 40 years of Homeopathic experience to putting the record straight.

A team of skeptics was set up to represent Randi. This team, and the group of homeopaths led by George Vithoulkas, started conducting preparatory work to the trial in 2003. A protocol was devised by a group of international scientists and the experiment was to take place in a hospital in Athens. The experiment involved homeopaths, under Vithoulkas` supervision, prescribing individualized remedies to a number of patients in a double blind fashion with half of the patients receiving placebo, and the other half a real remedy.

All seemed to be going well when in August 2006, Vithoulkas received a signed agreement from Randi in which he stated that he was satisfied with the suggested protocol. He also waived the need for a preliminary test - the part of the process that had foiled every applicant up to that point. However Randi then delayed the start of the experiment owing to health problems and lack of sufficient funding. Apparently Randi was asked by Vithoulkas to assign a representative in his absence while funding was being sought but Randi refused to do so. He also told the homeopaths that he needed 6 months to recuperate from his unspecified health problems.

This 6 month period, according to Vithoulkas, was critical. It coincided with the appointment of a new Mayor of Athens who installed a new chairman of the scientific committee and a new president of the hospital that was to be used for the experiment. Vithoulkas claims that Randi knew of these impending changes and was looking for a way of getting out of the challenge. It certainly was the most rigorous and well organized attempt to win the one million dollars that had ever been attempted. The Homeopaths believe that Randi got cold feet for this reason.

After a further 2 years of negotiating with the new authorities, the Homeopaths finally got the go ahead in Athens and started putting the final touches to the arrangements. In September 2008, a two day meeting was held in Greece between two of Randi`s representatives, plus Dr. Menachem Oberbaum, principal investigator of the experiment, and George Vithoulkas.

After this meeting the homeopaths thought everything was ready to go ahead but they were in for a rude surprise. In October 2008, one month after the meeting, they received the following communication from Randi:

"Forget all previous correspondence exchanged on the subject. What appears here is the current status. First, we require that George Vithoulkas submit a regular, properly-filled-out application and submit it just as we require everyone to do. After that has been received, we`ll go ahead as with any regular applicant - with the arrangements, including the requirement for the preliminary stage".

This new turn of events understandably infuriated Vithoulkas after his 5 years of toil. To make matters worse, Randi, according to Vithoulkas, claimed on his website (www.randi.org) that the homeopaths had withdrawn from the experiment. This accusation is strenuously denied by Vithoulkas.

It seems that all is not lost however (apart, maybe from \$1,000,000). The experiment may still go ahead with the participation of skeptics Alec Gindis and Hrasko Gabor who were originally representing Randi. They apparently wish to see through to the end what has been a long drawn out process. Vithoulkas is also keen to persevere as he believes strongly that the right type of experiment can prove to the critics that Homeopathic remedies do have a biological effect.

Watch this space.

A complete account of the story can be found on George Vithoulkas' website www.vithoulkas.com

About the author
www.natural-skin-health.com

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Karmanos cancer surgeon Dr. David Gorski linked to 'skeptics' kingpin James Randi caught on tape soliciting bl*w job from young man - source

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[Links, Blogs and Books on PseudoSkepticism and Paranormal Research](#)

[Great Web Links](#)

[The Skeptic World Site: Skeptical Resources](#) - An extensive list of resources on skepticism and critical thinking from all sides.

[Skeptics and their Arguments](#) – A list of articles refuting the arguments of UFO skeptics and debunkers.

[Skeptical Investigations](#) - A fabulous new site with articles on closed-minded vs. open-minded skepticism, and the latest news on paranormal research, issues, and leading spokespersons.

Skeptiko Podcasts – A new podcast show that explores controversial science with leading researchers and their critics. Hailed in paranormal circles as very good at getting to the heart of the issues.

Rupert Sheldrake – Researcher of Animal Telepathy who has conducted controlled experiments supporting the existence of telepathy in animals.

The Myth of the Randi Challenge - Revealing article on the Daily Grail

The Research of the Skeptics - A section of the site above that discusses the flawed methodology skeptics such as Susan Blackmore used in her conclusions which she later admitted were unwarranted.

Why I'm Not A Skeptic - An article by Michael Prescott which contains great analyses of pseudoskeptical views vs. the facts.

Organizations Promoting Open-Minded Research - A list of organizations conducting open-minded investigations into the truth of psychic phenomena.

Pioneering Investigators - A list of researchers, scientists, and spokespersons leading the way in paranormal research. Includes links to their websites.

Alternative Science - by Richard Milton. Contains many short but eloquent articles about a variety of alternative science-related topics.

CSICOP and the Skeptics: An Overview - by George Hansen.

Has CSICOP Lost the Thirty Years War? – by Guy Lyon Playfair

On PseudoSkepticism - by Marcello Truzzi, original CSICOP co-founder.

On Some Unfair Practices towards Claims of the Paranormal - by Marcello Truzzi, original CSICOP co-founder.

A Field Guide to Skepticism - by Dean Radin. A chapter in his book The Conscious Universe dealing with skeptics and their opposition to psi research.

The Logical Trickery of the UFO Skeptic - Brian Zeiler. Examines the skeptics' flawed approach to UFO research.

Fallacies of UFO Debunkers – By Indigo Child. Great refutations to the common arguments of UFO debunkers.

Zen and the Art of Debunkery - by Daniel Drasdin. A satire article describing the common tactics of debunkers.

Extraordinary Claim? Move the Goal Posts! - By Patrick Huyghe. An article describing the way skeptics move the goal posts.

Seven Warning Signs of Bogus Skepticism - by Rochus Boerner. How to catch pseudoskeptics in their tracks through their words alone.

How to Become a Media Skeptic - by Guy Lyon Playfair. A satire in how media career skeptics work and the tactics they use.

The Pathology of Organized Skepticism - by David Leiter. Experience of interacting with an organized Skeptics' group suggests an hypothesis that may explain what produces avowed Skeptics.

Symptoms of Pathological skepticism - William J. Beaty. Lists the symptoms associated with the pathological skepticism of closed-minded debunkers.

Folklore and the Rise of Moderation Among Organized Skeptics - A university article by a student, exploring the connections between folklore and organized skepticism.

Myths of Skepticism - An article by a skeptic elaborating on the limitations and needed revisions of organized skepticism.

Psychic Challenge - An article by Montague Keen challenging James Randi to live up to his repeated assertion that if adequate evidence of a paranormal reality could be demonstrated to him, he would be happy to acknowledge it and pay the one million dollar prize to the claimant. Includes accounts of Randi's shortcomings and mistakes. (You can read Randi's response to it here: <http://www.randi.org/jr/091903.html>)

Flim-Flam Flummery: A Skeptical Look at James Randi - An article by Michael Prescott investigating and exposing many errors and mistakes Randi made in his book Flim-Flam! Psychics, ESP, Unicorns, and Other Delusions. Includes a response by Randi, followed by Prescott's rebuttal and detailed analysis of many disputed issues.

The Skeptical Perspective - Remote viewer Bill Walker gives his take on organized skeptics. Includes some links to great articles and sites.

<http://www.unexplainedstuff.com/index.html> - A great online encyclopedia of unexplained phenomena.

<http://www.espresearch.com/> - The site of the famous psi researcher Russell Targ of Stanford Research Institute, listing his noteworthy works.

A Review of Pseudoskepticism - A new paper from Suppressed Science website which examines the methods of self-styled skeptics and the devices they employ to discredit pioneering science

My long-time friend Michael Goodspeed, a writer and paranormal talk show host, wrote a series of excellent articles examining both sides and posing challenging questions and arguments to the closed-minded skeptics.

- On Randi's hypocrisy: <http://www.rense.com/general50/james.htm>
- On psychic claims and skeptical explanations:
<http://www.rense.com/general51/ebramce.htm>
- On UFO phenomenon: <http://www.rense.com/general51/embr.htm>,
<http://www.rense.com/general51/seek3.htm>
- On alien abduction claims and skeptical explanations:
<http://www.rense.com/general51/ppr.htm>
- On monsters, creatures, and Bigfoot:
<http://www.rense.com/general52/seek.htm>

A Lawyer Presents the Case for the Afterlife - by Dr. Victor Zammit, a retired Australian lawyer, who passionately and skillfully presents a plethora of arguments and data in support of the existence of an Afterlife, and refutes closed-minded debunkers as well. Includes his free ebook that you can download. His list of Afterlife links can be found [here](#).

Dr. Zammit Rebuts the Skeptics

A Critique of Susan Blackmore's Dying to Live – By Greg Stone, author of a touching NDE novel Under the Tree, and a member of my email group.

Near Death Research Foundation – NDERF Is the largest NDE Website in the world with over 1800 full-text published NDE accounts.

Atlantis Rising Magazine - Atlantis Rising bi-monthly magazine offers coverage of ancient mysteries, unexplained anomalies, and future science—breaking news from world-class researchers in thought provoking and profusely illustrated articles.

Paranormal News – Source for UFO and Paranormal Related Information

Shift Happening – Come and see the crucial paradigms already shifting in our culture.

Pseudoskepticism

On Pseudoskepticism (Marcello Truzzi)

Symptoms of pathological skepticism (William J. Beaty)

Secular Humanism, society and sexual perversion

Richard Dawkins' pseudoskepticism

Stephen Barrett exposed in court

Some notes on skepticism

SCEPCOP (Winston Wu's new website)

The Skeptical Perspective (Bill Walker)

Extraordinary Claim? Move the Goal Posts! (Patrick Huyghe)

Comments on reductionism (Stephen S.)

A Field Guide to Skepticism (Dean Radin)

Skeptiko host, Alex Tsakiris, responds to Skeptics Guide to the Universe's, Dr. Steven Novella

Blindness of Debunkers and Radical Skeptics (Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove)

Propagandistic activities of CSICOP

CSICOP: The paradigm policy (Richard Milton)

The Skeptical Inquirer Embarrasses Itself (Michael Goodspeed)

The Relentless Hypocrisy (Michael Goodspeed)

The Problem with James Randi (Skylaire Alfvegren)
James Radin runs away
Richard Wiseman's Critique of the Feilding Report Refuted (Stephen Braude)
Is It Real Science? (Ted Dace)
Some unfair practices towards claims of paranormal (Marcello Truzzi)
Reflections on the reception of unconventional claims in science (Marcello Truzzi)
Rhetoric over substance (Charles Honorton)
Pathological disbelief (Brian Josephson)
The SPR Study Day on Skeptics
Response to pseudoskeptics of Orgone Research
Stephen Barrett put in his place again
Stephen Barrett defeated in court again (Full court document PDF)
Court Orders Quackbusters Stephen Barrett and Polevoy to Post \$433,715.93 Bond
Anecdotal evidence for pseudoskepticism
What I've learned from Skeptics (Alex Tsakiris)
How Skeptics work (audio by Rupert Sheldrake)
Winston Wu's treatise debunking pseudoskeptical arguments
Winston Wu's interview on pseudoskepticism
CSICOP and the skeptics (history and agenda of organized pseudoskepticism)
Pseudoskeptic's dialectical ploys
James Randi backed out his challenge to homeopath George Vithoulkas
James Randi's Challenge (Michael Prescott)
Who Will Watch the Watchers? (Michael Prescott)
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James Randi's lies about Dr. Sheldrake's research with animals
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Near Death Experiences Research

Survival After Death website

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Debate Alvin Plantinga vs. Daniel Dennett (audio)

Great Paranormal Blogs

Michael Prescott – Blog of Novelist and Paranormal Researcher Michael Prescott. Very thorough and praised in paranormal circles.

Dear Radin – Blog of Dean Radin, Psi Researcher at UNLV and Author of The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena.

Leo MacDonald - Awesome paranormal blog, very comprehensive.

Paranormalia – Fantastic comprehensive blog on paranormal issues by Robert McLuhan.

Subversive Thinking – An excellent and extensive paranormal blog by Jime.

Paradigm Experiment – Blog of Jim Clark. Deep analysis of different belief systems and paradigms.

Recommended Books

Randi's Prize: What Sceptics say about the paranormal, why they are wrong and why it matters by Robert McLuhan. An analysis of the fallacies and problems of the pseudoskeptic movement and organizations.

The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena by Dean Radin, UNLV researcher. Presents robust evidence from scientific studies that psi is real and no longer in doubt, and explains why skeptics still have the attitude against it that they do.

Parapsychology and the Skeptics by Chris Carter. A groundbreaking new book about the real research in Parapsychology and the Skeptics who are against it.

Science and the Near Death Experience by Chris Carter. Explains why Near Death Experiences (NDEs) offer evidence of an afterlife and discredits the psychological and physiological explanations for them. Challenges materialist arguments against consciousness surviving death.

The End of Materialism: How Evidence of the Paranormal is Bringing Science and Spirit Together by Charles Tart, perhaps his best book.

The Holographic Universe by Michael Talbot - A fascinating book that will stretch your mind and imagination to areas you never fathomed. The "holographic model" presented is like a unified theory that explains almost all common paranormal and supernatural phenomena.

Under the Tree by Greg Stone – A very enlightening novel of a man in a coma experiencing an NDE, while his loved ones and friends discuss NDE's in his hospital. All arguments on both sides of the NDE controversy are presented in clear easy-to-understand language. A must read for any NDE enthusiast or seeker.

The Power of Premonitions by Larry Dossey, M.D. – A compelling collection of cases suggesting that precognitive premonitions are real and part of our everyday lives.

Mind-Reach: Scientists Look at Psychic Abilities by Russell Targ and Harold E. Puthoff of SRI – From the book's site: This book is a lucid and fascinating record of historic experiments—historic because they put the seal of "hard" physical science upon evidence that some degree of psychic ability is universal—a phenomenon straight out of science fiction that actually happened, and can be made to happen again in any laboratory! The scientists even offer a "recipe" for developing your own ESP "information channel."

Appendix A: My Presentation Outline – Skepticism vs. Psi

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Presentation Speech Outline:

Skepticism vs. Psi

By Winston Wu

Author of Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments Of Paranormal Debunkers

I. The 2 general kinds of skeptics

A. Open-minded skeptics

- Typical traits: honest doubt, inquiry and investigation of both sides, considers evidence on all sides and seeing their good/bad points, asking exploratory questions, acceptance of evidence, good common sense, nonjudgmental

B. Closed-minded skeptics (also known as pseudoskeptics, debunkers, hard core materialists, scoffers, atheists)

- Typical traits: Automatic dismissal of all paranormal claims, predisposed to discredit all testimonials of a paranormal nature, denial of any and all evidence, scoffing, giving off an air of superior rationality, judgmental about things they know nothing about, quick to draw conclusions without evidence, using philosophical semantics to win arguments and invalidate paranormal or spiritual experiences

- The skepticism of closed-minded skeptics is a philosophy, not a science

II. Examples of organized skeptical groups which seek to debunk/discredit spiritual or paranormal claims:

A. CSICOP (Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal)

- Publisher of Skeptical Inquirer magazine. Website: www.csicop.org

- Former staff member Dennis Rawlins resigned after finding hard evidence of CSICOP intentionally suppressing its own findings which supported astrology (known as the "file drawer effect"), thus proving the organization's true agenda was simply to discredit/debunk in any way possible rather than to find the truth, in order to appease its subscribers. You can read Rawlins' report at <http://cura.free.fr/xv/14starbb.html>

B. JREF (James Randi Educational Foundation)

- Founded by magician and professional debunkers James Randi, who is infamous for his million dollar psychic challenge. Website: www.randi.org

- Critics claim that his challenge is a publicity stunt that no one can win, citing claims that applicants for the challenge go unanswered.

III. Common underhanded tactics of organized skeptics

- A. Raising the bar or moving the goal posts endlessly and undefined
- B. Dismissing ALL anecdotal evidence on purely philosophical grounds
- C. Double standards in accepting only anecdotal evidence that supports their claims
- D. Ignoring facts and evidence that don't fit into their beliefs, rather than updating their beliefs to conform to the facts (but this is human nature, which we all do)
- E. Forcing or adhering to any explanation rather than a paranormal one, even if it's been ruled out.

· Some articles that describe these type of tactics/tricks in detail:

- Zen and the Art of Debunkery (satire on skeptics),
<http://www.eskimo.com/~billb/pathskep.html>
- 10 Stupid Tricks of Skeptics, <http://www.primenet.com/~lippard/stupid-skeptic-tricks.txt>
- Extraordinary Claim? Move the goal posts!,
<http://www.anomalist.com/commentaries/claim.html>

IV. Common arguments of organized skeptics

- A. Anecdotal evidence is invalid
- B. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence
- C. Occam's Razor

D. Invisible Pink Unicorn analogy or Santa Claus gambit

V. Scientific evidence for psi

A. Ganzfeld

- Done repeatedly during the 70's and 80's, subjects choosing one out of four targets got between 33 and 45 percent hit rate rather than the chance rate of 25 percent.

B. Auto-Ganzfeld

- Same as above, but used computers for the testing, during the 80's and 90's.

- Repeated by Edinburg. Examined by experts who found no sensory leakage in controls.

. For more reading on Ganzfeld, see Dean Radin's book The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena.

. Links to scientific reports on Ganzfeld

<http://www.psych.cornell.edu/dbem/ganzfeld.html>

http://www.psych.cornell.edu/dbem/does_psi_exist.html

http://www.psych.cornell.edu/dbem/response_to_hyman.html

C. PEAR (Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research)

- Done over 20 years. Psychokinesis experiments revealed consistent statistical anomaly throughout thousands of trials. Skeptic Ray Hyman investigated and could find no lack of controls. See PEAR website at: <http://www.princeton.edu/~pear/>

D. Recent experiments by Dr. Gary Schwartz involving mediums and sitters

- The mediums got a hit rate far above chance, between 70 - 90 percent. Results

summarized in Jan 2001 edition of the Journal for the Society of Psychical Research. His recent book *The Afterlife Experiments* is convincing evidence of survival of consciousness and of telepathy.

E. Overwhelming anecdotal evidence for telepathy and ghosts

- At least half the population of the world has experienced either telepathy or ghosts that defied any conventional explanation, and everyone knows someone who has too. Therefore, it is extremely likely that these are real phenomenon. For example:

<http://www.unexplainedstuff.com/Mysteries-of-the-Mind/ESP-Researchers.html>

In their biennial report on the state of science understanding released in April 2002, the National Science Foundation found that 60 percent of adults in the United States agreed or strongly agreed that some people possess psychic powers or extrasensory perception (ESP). In June 2002, the Consumer Analysis Group conducted the most extensive survey ever done in the United Kingdom and revealed that 67 percent of adults believed in psychic powers. Report author Jan Walsh, commenting on the statistics that found that two out of three surveyed believed in an afterlife, said that as far as the British public was concerned, "the supernatural world isn't so paranormal after all."

VI. Conclusions

A. For most paranormal phenomenon, the jury is still out, since the evidence is scanty and ambiguous. However, the evidence for both telepathy and ghosts is very strong when you combine the strong scientific evidence and overwhelmingly common anecdotal evidence. Therefore, they are very likely to be real or at least there is something to it other than fraud, delusion, mistake or misperception.

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Reader Responses to

Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers

(Sorted in ascending order, newest at the top)

Winston:

Your critique of pseudo-skeptics is right on! They are tradition-bound materialists

opposed to examining evidence that they might be wrong. Victor has, in his latest newsletter, a lecture by Rupert Sheldrake in which he described the behavior of a "scientist" who refused to even look at evidence for telepathy. Lawyers have a maxim: "Don't confuse me with the truth; my mind is made up." Criminals under interrogation will say "that's my story and I'm sticking to it." The pseudos cannot be truly described as scientists because they never question their own premises, and they posit their premises as conclusions. They crave certainty, not realizing that, in my own coinage, "Fiction adores a vacuum."

Your Buddhism critique is excellent. I am going to forward it on to the minister of our church. One comment: the Taoist icon is Yin [not Ying] and Yang. But thanks for the ENLIGHTENMENT. Robert Monroe has shown that something like this can be attained through his techniques. You must be familiar with the Monroe Institute. And again, Dr. Brian Weiss has evidence for reincarnation, in the experiences of others. Remember Einstein said that learning begins with experiences. Repeatability is not a perquisite of validity. Man cannot replicate an earthquake or a solar eclipse, but they do happen.

John

Winston,

I am currently taking a course in philosophy in college and having stumbled upon your website "Debunking Common Skeptical Arguments Against Paranormal and Psychic Phenomena", I have decided to use your work as a reference in my paper. I find your arguments to be convincing and feel confident in presenting part of your material in my paper.

I have one question in regards to a story you mentioned in the NDE section (Argument #23). In the research experiment conducted by Cardiologist Michael Sabom, it is mentioned that the NDEers give "correct but general descriptions" of their resuscitation. Do you happen to know how Sabom was able to determine the correctness of these descriptions? i.e. Was he able to contact individuals who were present at the scene of the resuscitation? I'd just like a little bit of clarification before using this story.

Your site is very interesting and being someone who is always seeking what lies beyond this earth, the information you have provided/discovered has been very comforting.

Interesting series, Winston. I read through the first several sections yesterday, and highly respect the way you present the arguments. I'll browse more of it when I have the time.

I was raised in a traditional Catholic setting, and discovered humanism as my niche at age 15. (At 20, I found out what it was called.) Today I still consider myself one.

But what has really turned me off regarding some of my fellow atheists & agnostics is the highly-negative reaction I received from many of them when discovering natural health and the organic lifestyle two years ago, after reading Kevin Trudeau's Natural Cures book. I wrote a long article about it on my MySpace blog in June 2006, entitled, "Your Health is your Ultimate Freedom."

Some of them (and this one guy in particular) scorned me like I was a leper. And when berating my article, virtually all of their arguments were based upon theories, axioms, straw-man refutations, and ad hominem (especially against Trudeau). They always pointed out webpages from Skepdic, CSICOP, Quackwatch, etc. My presentation, on the other hand, is about 15% theory and 85% practice. I primarily say, "Here's what I've tried, and these are the results."

Not all of them are close-minded about it, though. At this last Winter Solstice party I attended, many of them (primarily women) asked me about what I'm doing to look and feel so great, and were very receptive. As for the few who previously berated me, they either semi-ignored me, or seemed to pretend as if I hadn't changed at all physically -- even after nearly two years of my living this way. I guess their little "theorems" must be more important to them than physical reality.

So when reading the first few sections of your pseudoskeptical pages that expose their tactics, I found myself nodding my head constantly -- as it gave me flashbacks to two years ago about the negative reception from several of those guys. My experience also has caused me to lose some respect for publications such as Skepdic, CSICOP, etc. While some of their material is very good, I absolutely cannot give point-blank credence to organizations that seem to imply that my very own lifestyle is a bunch of B.S.

So deep-down emotionally, I've felt a bit of a repulsiveness toward those publications.

Well, that's all from me for now. I'm looking forward to checking out more of your stuff on these subjects!

Hi Winston,

Thanks for your comments. It took me some time to write (and document) the pseudoskeptic's irrationality, inconsistencies and contradictions. I've read many of pseudoskeptics' webpages and books, and I took note of their contradictions. I thought to add all this in my comment and send it to you as a modest contribution to your great article (for me, a handbook) to debunk pseudoskeptics.

It's ok that you send my comments to your mailing list and add it to your e-book. We need to put together the best information, arguments and references against pseudoskepticism.

Do most Germans believe in the paranormal? I think so. But it can vary according to the specific phenomenon. I think a high percentage believes in telepathy and, maybe, in ghosts (it's amazing to see that many people believes in ghosts, many of them because personal experiences).

In Germany, exists the respective pseudoskeptical organization. It's called GWUP, and it has the same agenda, rhetoric and methods of CSICOP. And there are some good german websites debunking GWUP (e.g. <http://www.skeptizismus.de/>). A former member of that group, Edgar Wunder, wrote a long and excellent article exposing the methods and agenda of GWUP. Wunder's contribution is very important, because he was an "insider". Sadly, it haven't been translated to english language. If you understand german language, or have german friends, that article is a must read: <http://www.psychophysik.com/html/re-061-skeptizismus.html>

(Also, you could use a free online translator to translate that article to english.)

Winston, recently I get a copy of an excellent parapsychology book. It was written by Chris Carter and titled "Parapsychology and the Skeptics": <http://www.parapsychologyandtheskeptics.com/>

Carter destroys the best skeptical arguments using the scientific evidence of parapsychology. He deals only with the best criticism of informed pseudoskeptics (like Hyman, Blackmore, etc.), not with the rhetoric, polemic and propapandism of Randi and others.

I think that book is a great contribution to scientific parapsychology. Carter's next book will cover afterlife evidence. I hope Carter's books be translated to german and other languages. They can very useful to convince open mind scientists.

Thanks Winston,
J?rgen

Dear Winston:

I'm Jürgen and I write you from Germany. Let me tell that your article about debunkers/pseudoskeptics of PSI is the best handbook to debate with them. I used to debate pseudoskeptics as a pastime, using the arguments and tactics of your article. However, currently I don't debate with them anymore because I realize that they're immune to rational discourse and scientific evidence for PSI. Their minds have been damaged by false data and rhetoric spread by professional debunkers. They're lost any critical faculties to examine pseudoskepticism.

I have strong interest in psi research (specially near-death experiences), spirituality and philosophy and sociology of science. I realized the existence of your article, reading the article titled "NDE rhetoric, debunking the debunkers?" (<http://www.nderf.org/NDE%20Rhetoric.htm>). The author (Jody) uses many of your arguments against debunkers, and adapts them to their specific arguments against NDEs.

There are 3 articles about pseudoskepticism that everyone should know. The best is yours (because it deals with all the arguments of debunkers). Another good article is "some notes on skepticism":

<http://www.suppressedscience.net/skepticism.html>

And the third one is the article of parapsychologist Charles Honorton titled "Rhetoric over substance: the impoverished state of skepticism":

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2320/is_n2_v57/ai_14890637/pg_1

I'd like to comment in some specific points of pseudoskeptics and their arguments:

1) Anecdotal evidence and testimonies: as you explained in your article, pseudoskeptics claims that anecdotal evidence and testimonies are worthless as scientific evidence. But that claim is false: there are some sciences that use testimonies as valid evidence, e.g:

forensic sciences:

<http://www.crimeandclues.com/testimony.htm>

There is a complete field called psychology of testimony and forensic psychology that deals as the realibility of testimonies and their scientific use:

<http://psychology.about.com/od/historyofpsychology/p/forensichistory.htm>

In fact, Richard Wiseman wrote in the Skeptical Inquirer a paper titled "Eyewitness testimony and the paranormal" (<http://csicop.org/si/9511/eyewitness.html>) where he writes: " Much of the evidence relating to paranormal phenomena consists of eyewitness testimony. However, a large body of experimental research has shown that such testimony can be extremely unreliable"

Look that Wiseman wrote that testimonies "can be" (not IT IS) extremely unreliable (not that IT IS extremely unreliable). PseudoSkeptics tend to confound a possibility with a fact.

Wiseman adds an interesting point that most pseudoskeptics forget: "In short, there is now considerable evidence to suggest that individuals' beliefs and expectations can, on occasion, lead them to be unreliable witnesses of supposedly paranormal phenomena. It is vital that investigators of the paranormal take this factor into account when faced with individuals claiming to have seen extraordinary events. It should be remembered, however, that such factors may hinder accurate testimony regardless of whether that testimony is for or against the existence of paranormal phenomena; the observations and memory of individuals with a strong need to disbelieve in the paranormal may be as biased as extreme believers. In short, the central message is that investigators need to be able to carefully assess testimony, regardless of whether it reinforces or opposes their own beliefs concerning the paranormal"

As we know, pseudoskeptics only invalid the testimonies in favor of paranormal, but not against the paranormal. In fact, they use testimonies to debunk the paranormal, for example:

a) In the entry "Sai Baba" of the skeptic dictionary (<http://skepdic.com/saibaba.html>) you can read above a link titled "Witnesses" and other links titled "Conny Larsson's story" and "charges of Sai Baba with many counts of molesting boys"

b) PseudoSkeptics like to claim that Richard Feynmann "debunked" or "exposed" Uri Geller. But in close inspection, Feynmann's experience with Geller was an informal, anecdotal account of Feynmann, not a laboratory scientific test published in peer-review scientific journals:

<http://www.indian-skeptic.org/html/fey2.htm>

c) At the time of William Crookes, pseudoskeptics quoted a testimony of Volckmann to debunk Crookes' investigation with the medium. Victor Zammit rebutted that testimonial evidence of pseudoskeptics:

<http://www.victorzammit.com/articleskeptics/1sirwilliam.html>

It's obvious that pseudoskeptics' permanent damaged and biased mind give more credit to anti-paranormal uncontrolled/anecdotal testimonies against mediums than laboratory scientific experimentation with mediums, as the recent triple blind study of Dr. Gary Schwartz:

<http://www.explorejournal.com/article/PIIS155083070600454X/fulltext>

The same apply to Ufo evidence:

<http://www.ufoevidence.org/>

d) PseudoSkeptic Joe Nickel used the testimony of Michael O'Neill to cast doubts on John Edwards: "An article in Time magazine suggested John Edward may have used just such chicanery. One subject, a marketing manager named Michael O'Neill had received apparent messages from his dead grandfather but, when his segment aired, he noted that it had been improved through editing"

<http://csicop.org/si/2001-11/i-files.html>

Matt Nisbet, also uncritically accepted as valid the testimony of Jaroff and O'Neill: " In support of his assertions of Edward's possible hot readings, Jaroff detailed the experience of Michael O'Neill, a past audience member on Crossing Over who had been the subject of a reading by Edward. According to O'Neill's account, producers of the show had spliced into the final program clips of O'Neill nodding yes into the videotape after statements by Edward with which he remembers disagreeing. In addition, according to O'Neill, most of Edward's "misses," both in relation to him and other audience members, had been edited out of the final tape.

O'Neill also claimed that before the show, assistants to the producers had gathered information about audience members, including their names and family histories. O'Neill also told Jaroff that most of the conversations among the audience while they were seated in the stands waiting the start of the show were about dead loved ones, information that could have been picked up by microphones strategically placed about the amphitheater"

<http://csicop.org/genx/edward/>

2)PseudoSkeptics are totally ignorant of the sociological/philosophical problems of science: For example, they like to use terms like "pseudoscience" or "pathological science", but don't explain the conceptual and theoretic problems of these terms and the fact that past theories called "pathological" are now recognized as good scientific theories:

<http://www.hyle.org/journal/issues/8-1/bauer.htm>

Also, they ignore that scientific establishment tend to be conservative and, many times, hostile to unorthodox theories. For example, there is experimental evidence of confirmatory bias in peer-review system used in scientific journals:

<http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~wstarbuc/Writing/Prejud.htm>

And the methods used to suppress the scientific dissidents are never discussed in pseudoskeptical magazines:

<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/Suppression-Of-Dissent.htm>

<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/pubs/99air/index.html>

<http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/dissent/documents/>

And the existence of monopolies and scientific research cartels (and their influence in scientific enterprise) are systematically ignored:

<http://henryhbauer.homestead.com/21stCenturyScience.pdf>

The pseudoskeptic's solid and consistent ignorance of these sociological/burocratic problems of science makes him very credulous and uncritical of accepted scientific practise. They have a very naive idea of science.

3)PseudoSkeptics are uncritically accept almost all "official" stories: As an example, pseudoskeptic Michael Shermer uncritically accepted and defended the official story of 9/11, in spite of massive evidence of the inconsistencies and valid criticism of the official story:

http://www.serendipity.li/wot/sciam_reply.htm

<http://911scholars.org/>

4)Religious agenda: as you have shown in your article, most pseudoskeptics are atheists and scientific materialist. They use the "scientific" rhetoric as a propaganda to promote a materialistic/anti-spirituality worldview. As an example, take the book of Lewis Wolpert titled "Six impossible things before breakfast". There, Wolpert try to promote atheism as the only rational option because there is not "evidence" for God. (By the way, Wolpert also tries to debunk psi phenomena with the same argument). To a criticism of Wolpert's book and rhetoric, see:

http://www.arn.org/docs/williams/pw_lewiswolpert.htm

http://www.skepticalinvestigations.org/New/Examskeptics/Wolpert_evidence.html

PseudoSkeptics/dogmatic atheists' rhetoric, propaganda and behaviour is, maybe, one of the reasons that atheists are considered America's most distrusted minority:

http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/topnav/press/atheists_are_distrusted

5)"Scientific witch-hunting" and fascistic behaviour. When the pseudoskeptic has the opportunity, he uses "witch hunting" practiques, intimidation, censorship, etc. to fight "enemies". As an example, look at pseudoskeptics actions against Wilhelm Reich:

<http://www.orgonelab.org/gardner.htm>

<http://www.orgonelab.org/carlinskyletter.htm>

6)Debunkers are supporters of obsolete and refuted philosophies (e.g. positivism): most pseudoskeptics are dogmatic supporters of positivism: the philosophy that states that the only authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge, and that such knowledge can only come from positive affirmation of theories through strict scientific method:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positivism>

Thanks Winston for let me share my thoughts with you.

Best wishes

J?rgen

Hi Winston,

Thanks for add my e-mail to your reader response page. Yes, I'm from Spain. I found your great article searching for refutations of dogmatic christians and atheists. A friend told me of your articles debunking both of them and passed me the links. I really enjoy them so much.

I've been following the controversy between the so-called "new atheists" (Richard

Dawkins, Sam Harris, etc.) and God believers/religion followers. My opinion is that most of atheists' argumentation is fallacious and dishonest. But a point by point refutation of atheism haven't written yet.

Recently, I've read two very good piece of information against dogmatic atheism:

1)The first one is this article of Alan Roebuck titled "How to respond to a Supercilious Atheist":

http://www.americanthinker.com/2008/01/how_to_respond_to_a_supercilio.html

2)Also, the book "The Irrational Atheists" is a very good response to Dawkins, Harris and Hitchens. You can download this book (in pdf format) for free here:

<http://irrationalatheist.com/freedl.html>

I think a refutation of atheism's best arguments don't need to be a defense of God or religions or paranormal (in theory, an agnostic can criticize atheism without to defend God). It's enough to show the double standars, unproven assumptions and pseudo-scientific tactics of these people. For instance, the argument "If God created everything then who created God" doesn't make any sense. We don't need to have an explanaiton for the explanaiton, because if it's requested in all the cases, we couldn't explain anything. It would drive us to a infinite regress.

Also, scientific atheists like Dawkins ask for "evidence" of God, but they never told us what kind of evidence convince them. (You've addressed this type of tactic in your paper). They see God as an (false) "scientific hypothesis", not as a philosophical position or worldview. They confound the scientific with the philosophical level. This clever trick is used to bring to the scientific arena a non-scientific debate (of course, you can use many arguments from science to argue in favor or against God; but it doesn't make it a scientific discussion).

As I said in my last e-mail, I think a refutation of atheists' best arguments is needed, and you're the right person to do it. But something is also true: atheists don't have many positive arguments (to prove their position). Most of their arguments are negative: criticism of religions or concepts of God. But many of these negative arguments are fallacious or based upon distortions and half-truths, or improper mixing of (materialistic) philosophy with science.

Maybe, some specific points could be addressed in a hypothetical or eventual article against atheism:

1)Moral and values in an atheistic worldview. Are moral values an objective reality? What's the evidence for it?

2)The sense of life to an atheist. Have the life a objective sense or finality?

3)Evidence that atheists would accept to believe in God. (Some former atheist have accepted evidence for God. As an example, recently former atheist Antony Flew changed his mind, and now he's a deist. He wrote a book, as his last philosophical

legacy, titled "There is a God". You can read the story here. A recent interview with Flew can be read here.)

4)Positive evidence for philosophical naturalism and materialism.

I think the above points are the weakest points of the atheist's position.

Maybe, in your next updating of the debunking skeptic paper, you consider to add some arguments or commentaries in your argument # 29 on atheists. It may give some idea to new readers about the relationship between skepticism and atheism, and how they use similar (or the same) arguments against God or the paranormal.

Regards!!!!
Deya

Hello Mr.Wu,

Your treatise "debunking pseudoskeptical arguments of paranormal debunkers" is the best refutation of pseudoskeptics' arguments, tactics and fallacies to reject the evidence for paranormal phenomena. I've recommended your article to every person that I know.

I'd like to suggest you a similar treatise debunking fundamentalist atheism; because your argument #29 (on atheists) is good, but very short.

As you know, the recent assault of atheists/skeptics on God is not only very lucrative, but it's a indirect assault in parapsychology and alternative sciences too. These "new atheists" include in their books chapters on parapsychology, ufology and paranormal phenomena, and they try to debunk them with the same anti-God/anti-spirituality pseudo-scientific rhetoric and fallacious arguments.

Also, they defend Darwin's theory as an article of faith, and accuse any scientist who dares to question it or criticize it. They use the "creationist" label as an ad hominem ploy to avoid scientific valid criticism against Darwin's theory. Fact is that many scientists question, as scientific and sound arguments, that theory. As an example, you can read the well-documented scientific papers of spanish biologist Maximo Sandin (he's not a creationist, nor a religious person. He's a biologist who considers the Synthetic Theory of evolution has many flaws and should be replaced by a new scientific theory). You can read Sandin's papers at:

http://www.uam.es/personal_pdi/ciencias/msandin/synthetic_theory.html
http://www.uam.es/personal_pdi/ciencias/msandin/biology.html

But dogmatic/fundamentalist/irrational atheists will interpret these criticism as a defense of God, religion or creationism (most dogmatic atheists are quasi-paranoid and see God, religion and faith in every corner; they suffer of black/white thinking, a typical psychological sign of irrational fanaticism) when, actually, they're valid scientific criticism against synthetic theory of evolution. (Sandin doesn't mention "God" or "creationism" in his papers. He's writing on science, not on religion)

There are some good websites exposing the fallacies of fundamentalist atheism (e.g. <http://www.atheistdelusion.net/>). Also, some good refutation of atheist's basic philosophical foundation (e.g metaphysical naturalism/materialism) have been written. As an example, read philosopher David Wood's sound criticism and clear exposing of the fallacious arguments of Richard Carrier's book Sense and Goodness without God in defense of atheism and naturalism:

<http://www.answeringinfidels.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=86>

But most critics of atheism are Christian apologetics. So, many people may consider that these (very good) criticisms are biased.

By this reason, given the great success of both of your articles (debunking pseudoskeptics and debunking Christian fundamentalism), you're the right person to write a new treatise: "debunking every argument of fundamentalist atheists". Only you can do it.

Kind regards,
Deya

Dear Winston,

Your article "debunking pseudoskeptical arguments on paranormal debunkers" is a must read to any person who seeks to understand the nature of pseudoskepticism. I grasped the basic ideological foundation of pseudoskepticism when you wrote: "Eventually, I realized that their skepticism was not about an open inquiry for truth, but rather a philosophy they used to manipulate data to fit their beliefs". This is the essence of pseudoskepticism and the basic truth that any person should know about it.

This fact was also explained in the parapsychologist George Hansen's book Tricksterbook and the Paranormal. Hansen documented the influence of atheism in the

debunking movement:

<http://www.tricksterbook.com/ArticlesOnline/CSICOPoverview.htm>

Also, I read Paul Sandoval's "rebuttal" of your article, and I think Sandoval's response is a superb example on how to use ad logicam fallacy (or fallacist's fallacy <http://www.fallacyfiles.org/fallfall.html>) to win arguments. He creates a straw man and then tries to spot logical fallacies in your reasoning and arguments, but he doesn't refute them. As you wrote, pseudoskeptics use philosophical semantics to win arguments. They try to impress the readers using pompous language and erudite pseudological terms, instead of using sound reasoning and facts to rebut and refute arguments.

Your comments on pseudoskeptic's argument on alternative medicine is very good. Pseudoskeptics love to debunk alternative health methods and use anecdotal evidence to "prove" the inefficacy of these methods, but don't say nothing about the thousand of deaths per year caused by conventional medicine:

<http://www.noblindmen.com/Is%20US%20Health%20Really%20the%20Best.htm>

In fact, some pseudoskeptics like quackbuster Stephen Barrett are uncritical apologists and propagandists of conventional treatments. Fortunately, these quackbusters have been exposed as liars in U.S. courts and their ties with FDA, AMA, etc. were unmasked:

<http://www.canlyme.com/quackwatch.html>

http://www.bolenreport.net/feature_articles/feature_article060.htm

<http://www.humanticsfoundation.com/barrettvsrosenthal.htm>

<http://www.quackpotwatch.org/>

<http://www.chiro.org/LINKS/QUACKWATCHERS.shtml>

<http://www.healthfreedomlaw.com/>

Your article was the first on-line resource to expose the fallacies, motivation, agenda

and dishonesty of pseudoskeptics. Currently (and maybe inspired by your article) other people are doing their job to unmask and document the dishonest tactics of pseudoskeptics on specific cases:

<http://paginas.terra.com.br/educacao/criticandokardec/criticizingskepticism.htm>

Kind regards

Jessica

Dear Sir,

My name is Nenad Djurdjevic, I'm the moderator and co-admin of the website:
<http://www.bosnian-pyramid.com>.

I found your articles about "Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers Revised 2006" very interesting.

I'm preparing a topic about (healthy) skepticism, debunking and pseudoskepticism in our Forum: <http://www.bosnian-pyramid.com/forum/>,

so, I would like to ask herewith your permission to include and post some of your articles in that topic.

Thank you in advance!

Kind regards
Nenad Djurdjevic

alias Hyperborean
Moderator and Co-Admin at:
<http://www.bosnian-pyramid.com>

dear Winston

I am in the process of reading your article entitled "debunking common skeptical arguments against paranormal and psychic phenomena". I can tell you have really given

this topic a lot of thought. I think this article is very well done. as I have been doing research for the past 15 years on such topics as meaning and purpose of life and life after death I have found it interesting how rigid the beliefs are of atheists who happen to be skeptics. especially those skeptics that belong to skeptic organizations. this was a surprise to me when I started because I considered myself a skeptic and probably considered myself atheist/agnostic. I was not impressed even as a child with most religious beliefs as many did not pass even simple logic and reasoning tests. I knew from experience that religious people tended to be rigid in their beliefs but was totally surprised how rigid atheists in general were rigid in their beliefs.

I am sure you know this but I find it interesting that when professional skeptics appear on TV to comment on paranormal events their explanations most of the time do not even address the event and almost always they only comment on one piece of evidence of the event rather than take the evidence as a whole. for example crop circles, because a couple of guys in England admitted to making crop circles skeptics state that is the reason for crop circles when in fact they are appearing in many countries in the world. one professional skeptic stated crop circle investigators should take up collecting stamps and not waste their time researching crop circles. if the world took his advice I wonder how many discoveries would have been made in human history. this person contradicts his very belief in his insistence on using the scientific method as the only way to discover truth. his belief has closed his mind to the possibilities of new discoveries. in 1899 the head of the patent office in Washington dc stated to congress that the patent office should be shut down because all the inventions that are possible have been made.

I also think people that believe almost anything said about the paranormal can be a bigger danger to advancement in knowledge than the skeptics. maybe we need them both as a check and balance. I somehow have this feeling that the universe is right on track and in our ignorance we are unable to see this perfection in action.

anyhow great article on skeptics. I had one skeptic tell me that skeptics don't have beliefs only opinions. how is that for the ultimate in denial.

bill

Hi Winston,

My name is Gary Osborn. I'm the author of The Serpent Grail (Watkins 2005) and The Shining Ones (Watkins 2006).

I writing to you to say that I found your treatise, Debunking PseudoSkeptical Arguments of Paranormal Debunkers absolutely fascinating and spot on.

I would like your permission to place a link to it on a page on my website - or even the whole article if that's OK.

<http://garyosborn.moonfruit.com/>

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Gary Osborn

Hi Winston. My name is Travis, and I've been heavily researching Paranormal Phenomenon for over eight years now. I've been very interested in Paranormal Phenomenon all of my life due to many very convincing personal paranormal experiences that I've had all throughout my life that continue to intrigue me, as well as from hearing many profound personal anecdotal accounts of paranormal phenomenon from many very sincere family members of mine and from very sincere friends of mine and others, and from documented research books on the matters, etc, on quite a grand scale over the years. I began heavily researching Paranormal Phenomenon online about eight years ago and I continue to do so. I'm also heavily into Spirituality, Mysticism, and Direct Experience of God. (Heavily in a Shamanistic, Taoist, Buddhist, Hindu, and Judeo-Christian Mystic [Gnostic; Kabbalist] Panentheistic Context.)

I too have been in many debates with skeptics, and I too have noticed many of their clever cop-out tactics in not having to deal with the evidence that doesn't agree with them. I always go for the jugular in debates, I always present the stuff that I *know* they cannot explain away, and I give many quotations and sources to support the validity of

the claims being made, as well as any website links discussing the topics indepth. What's their answer to it all? Universal Conspiracy Theory and *all* of the phrase cliches mentioned in your article "Debunking Common Skeptical Arguments Against Paranormal and Psychic Phenomenon".

Your article was a breath of fresh air to read. It let me know that I'm not alone in pointing stuff like this out to people, and that someone else like me can stand up to the skeptics and point out the fallacies in their own close-minded personal dogma driven pseudoskepticism. You explained everything so perfectly, I was just amazed at how well you picked their arguments apart and posted many excellent examples of hard evidence of paranormal phenomenon in such an amazing fashion.

I've been debating skeptics for years, and it has crossed my mind a couple of times to try to make an article like this, but now that I've read through yours, I see there is no need. You hit the nail right on the head ten times over.

What gets me though, is I do not understand how these close-minded people can get their minds set like that, and actually *want* there to be nothing paranormal or supernatural in the world. I've personally heard from many skeptics that they actually *want* to be erased, that they actually *want* death to be the end for them, and that they truly *hope* there is nothing. Others I've heard from say they actually *don't* want death to be the end but that they "know" there is nothing after death, and that they "know" that the idea of the afterlife is nothing more than a fairy tale created by weak-minded people who can't accept "reality". *rolls his eyes*

They say, "I'm just a bunch of random chemical reactions, nothing more."

I've actually shown some of these depressing skeptics the existing paranormal evidence for life after death on a caring rather than in-your-face level, hoping to cheer them up and let them see meaning in life, and as expected, they violently attack it, ridicule it, use character assassination, go with the weakest skeptical explanation, ignore anything unexplainable that doesn't agree with them, and are through with it, case closed. *shakes his head in sorrow*

I wonder what their transition is like after death. Do they spend several thousand years in unprogressed ignorance thinking that their ongoing afterlife experience is merely a prolonged hallucination? I feel for these people. Their potential spiritual life is stagnated/blocked from them due to their close-mindedness, and much of what they do with their life is attempt to "deconvert" others from spirituality and spiritual ideas, and believe in nothing. I remember reading a post from one woman on a forum I visited, stating that her immediate family was once highly spiritual people who believed in a higher power, soul, afterlife, etc, and that she successfully "deconverted" them all through "science and logic", and now they all think like her and believe there is nothing. *mind boggle*

I'm thinking that in the above context, either the close-minded skeptical side is truly

stronger, or there are just so many people ignorant of current paranormal evidence and it's implications that they are thus gullible enough to seamlessly sway to the close-minded skeptical side so easily and let the likes of James Randi be their charismatic secular guru to think for them and don't do enough personal inner soul searching for themselves to find the truth. I'll say it's the latter.

Oh, and by the way, I recently came across a Skeptic's Report Article that claimed to "debunk" your Article in question and called it "pleading a lost cause". I read through it, and it was PA-THE-TIC. I laughed at how weak and poorly presented the critic's "rebuttals" were compared to yours, and he cleverly omitted (but still linked to) your hard anecdotal evidences that were far too strong for him to explain away, and so he ignored them, and wouldn't comment on them. He also often fell into the exact same traps that you were critiquing in your Article, the most often of which was the famed "anecdotal evidence proves nothing" repeated over and over endlessly. I was going to suggest that you answer him, but I realised in reading his weak "rebuttals" indepth that there is really no need to. The close-minded skeptic's side is truly "pleading a lost cause". ;)

Cheers you on

Travis (Also known as "Eteponge" or "Parupunte_Medapani" elsewhere online)

Hi Winston!

Sorry it took so long to respond - I've had a lot on my plate lately. Things seem to be gearing up again in the Investigation arena with the holidays over and done with. We've gotten two more requests in as many days so I've been coordinating and making phone calls. I also had an MP3 Radio Interview with The Night Watchman of the Night Watchman Chronicles yesterday - pretty cool!

Thank you for allowing me to quote you in my book. I have to say that you've got the BEST arguments I've ever seen. I've always said pretty much the same things in my arguments with those PseudoSkeptics out there, but you do it SO eloquently and intelligently! I've shared your article with many people - they're all impressed as well.

For a sneak peek at what the book is about - here's a link to check out:

www.liftingtheveil.moonfruit.com

The Orange County Ghost Hunters is a paranormal investigation team that I started last year. We've since grown to 12 investigators and we've done just over a half a dozen investigations. My goal is to remain open minded yet objective, so our team is made up of both psychics and "debunkers" but we're all believers. I myself am a psychic,

channeler and demonologist. We also have a remote viewer. A good mix I think. :)

If you're ever in the area, PLEASE feel free to call!

Thanks again and look forward to hearing from you again,

Warmest regards,
Diana Akroyd (Only A Distant Relation to Dan)
www.OrangeCountyGhostHunters.com

Wow Wu! Just took a quick look at your site, and I'm looking forward to getting into it. We have a lot of ground in common here, I think. I have a pretty strong background in religion and the so-called paranormal too, and have come out of it all as a non-sectarian theist.

You would very likely appreciate my book FUNDAMENTAL BLASPHEMY, which I wrote after spending two years in a fundamentalist ministry as disciple to a patriarchal prophet.

I'll attach an E-book version of it which you might be able to access. Some servers won't take it because it is an .exe file. You can also find a lot of that book and another, the early new-age study, DOWSING FOR HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS, in the form of excerpts and articles on my site.

and yes, I am covering a living by writing, though there were a lot of years I wrote and wrote and never saw payday. I presently have a screenplay in production. check out mockingbirdfilms.com and follow the links to THE BLACK MESSIAH MURDERS.

Mockingbird Films

Best regards,

James

Hi Winston,

I just wanted to commend you on your article. We share all the same interests as well as similar religious backgrounds that I too feel caused me to search for answers. While reading your article, I felt as if you were speaking for me. I've had the very same arguments with pseudoskeptics and in my own way, have had many of the exact same responses as you.

I've just completed an autobiographical book about my spiritual awakening and research of the paranormal and I was wondering if I might be able to quote you on your Occams Razor argument. Would that be possible?

I want to keep this short and sweet, but kudos to you on your well thought out, written and thought provoking article. It's provided me with the ammunition I will more than likely need once my book is published as it will certainly receive MUCH scrutiny.

I wish you only the very best in your future endeavors!

Warmest regards,

Diana Akroyd

Founder of the Orange County Ghost Hunters

Investigator, Researcher, Demonologist, Psychic & Soon To Be Author

www.orangecountyghosthunters.com

Hi Winston

I am very pleased to have found and read your web pages after reviewing Victor Zammit's articles on his web site. I am extremely interested in the area's of research you and he and many others have and are covering. It is refreshing to see that you manage to articulate So many counter arguments so constructively. You have demonstrated that you are extremely capable of challenging the status Quo and idea's that many would not analysis with such Sharp insight. Well done you. Nice to see (like myself) someone who is in deed forming a healthier encompassment of the complexity and diversity of Paranormal and Psychic Life? Thanks for helping me understand area's where I may have had weak analysis or not seen more clearly the possibilities on applying 'scepticism'. I am 'Open Minded and yes certainly am Sceptic'. I am making an attempt to educate myself about my own experiences, which would feel, embarrassed to try to explain to others or substantiate, as I don't fully understand it myself. The need to do this makes me sceptic in itself, as any conversation about such tends to make us all need answers to things that confound us. I am more inclined to just accept that we don't have a satisfactory explanation to date for all these wonderments. Such is the desire to understand complexity in all its forms. I will regard the articles you have written closely next time I do have a paranormal experience although I must admit I don't think anything I have read anywhere yet explains adequately the experiences or gives Clarity to the mystery. I too need to up date my outlook, as it's easy to be seduced by reductionism or materialism to think we will find answers by taking things apart and putting them back together.

I like the theory and I know that's all it is a 'theory' that the Mind uses the brain to resonate through to manifest itself.

I am not at all as well educated as you obviously are Winston and I do apply common sense each time I experience something. This too makes little difference so I learn to forget what the big scheme of things is and feels honoured that I have experiences that make me think outside the restrictive 'box' and comfort zones of understanding.

I will research as much as I can to expand my understanding. One thing is for sure 'we are all in a constant state of transition aren't we'?

That includes all we know and think we understand. Such 'refinement' needs & affords continual growth and flexibility. I look forward to linking back to your web site

To see what new articles you cover and will read with interest what you write.

Well done and thanks for the insight been very informative Winston.

I am researching "medium ship" at the moment and there are few people who live up to passing the tests described. Like all walks of life "Spiritualism" can and does attract all kinds of people that may or may not be gifted with varying Psychic or Mediumistic ability. It is hard to measure to validate and verify some messages. It is also too easy to fake and that's the problem I have like so many people. A few fakes do a lot of harm and we can all too easily fall foul of including all as fakes due to one unsatisfactory experience.

I am learning just to observe and keep observing as many mediums as possible and seeing how their styles and delivery's are demonstrated. I think Gordon Smith's advice in his new book "Unbelievable Truth" is good advice.

Like you he is grounded and observes the "real world" with a sharp focus.

Thanks again Winston what an excellent read. Look forward to more like that.

Linda

Hi Mr. Wu - Good job on the article. I was reading a rebuttal by a skeptic, and on the page where you mention Ian Stevenson's 20 Cases, they say that 20 cases (anecdotal stories) is hardly evidence. They completely ignore the fact that Stevenson has thousands of cases, of which at least 200 are completely solid.

I was fortunate enough to witness the phenomena of remote viewing personally, so I continue to be amazed by the amount of energy people spend trying to "debunk" phenomena that are real. My sessions are documented on my website at <http://home.comcast.net/~wjw/remoteviewing.html>.

--Bill Walker

From Whitley Strieber, Author and Radio Host of UnknownCountry.com:

<http://www.unknowncountry.com/mindframe/opinion/?id=23>

A Brilliant Rebuttal to the Skeptics

It is no secret that many scientists are becoming disenchanted with skeptics groups and the skeptical paradigm in general. Skeptics groups have been losing membership, and some institutions now take a dim view of membership in groups like CSICOP, the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.

This is because of a growing concern that skeptics groups and publications are interfering with the progress of science by attempting to compel the rejection of evidence that does not fit existing models of reality. Institutionalized skepticism is beginning to appear more like a religious practice, far removed from the ideals of scientific objectivity which inspired founders such as Dr. Carl Sagan.

Winston Wu has now written an essay that brilliantly and decisively rebuts the general skeptical arguments against the paranormal. This is among the best essays ever written on this subject, and deserves extensive study. The essay carefully moves through the entire skeptical lexicon of arguments, rebutting each in turn.

As it reveals the fallacy in each argument, it builds a crucial case against the whole skeptical approach to reality, suggesting that it is, essentially, a form of superstition that has the effect of filtering out data if it cannot be explained by accepted scientific theory.

The essay suggests that a clear-eyed view of evidence is essential, and that it is lacking both among believers and skeptics. Essentially, Mr. Wu is asserting that the evidence is undigested by science as a result of its being too uncritically embraced by believers and rejected by skeptics.

Mr. Wu identifies a difference between healthy skepticism and the cynicism of blanket rejection of evidence.

To read Mr. Wu's essay, [click here](#).

Also visit Mr. Wu's contra-skeptic website at DebunkingSkeptics.com and participate in the counterskeptic group, SCEPCOP.

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P. Vergilius Maro, Aeneid
J. B. Greenough, Ed.

("Agamemnon", "Hom. Od. 9.1", "denarius")

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litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;
5multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem,
inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum,
Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.
Vergil. *Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics* Of Vergil. J. B. Greenough. Boston. Ginn & Co.
1900.

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Anne Mahoney, Overview of Latin Syntax, Sentence Construction

Cross-references in general dictionaries to this page (4):

Lewis & Short, Trōs

Lewis & Short, arma

Lewis & Short, cāno

Lewis & Short, ōra

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The trial: The plaintiffs' case

The trial: The defense

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A legal history of evolution

Evolution became a subject of bitter debate—and litigation—in the US as it slowly crept into science textbooks. By the 1920s, groups whose faith led them to understand the Bible as a literal account of events took their objections to Darwin's theory to state legislatures in an effort to limit or ban school instruction in evolution. Traditionally, curriculum in the US was decided by each school district; there was no national requirement. Thus, teaching practices varied widely from state to state, as well as within state boundaries.

John Scopes in 1925.

In 1925, Tennessee became the first state to ban the teaching of evolution entirely from public school science classrooms. The Tennessee Anti-Evolution Act, also known as the Butler Act after the legislator who wrote it, proscribed teaching “any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and [teaching] instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.” [1] Eager to test the law's constitutionality in court, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) recruited a 24-year-old teacher named John Thomas Scopes to be indicted for violating the law. (Scopes was a substitute biology teacher who could not recall whether he had actually taught evolution.) The trial of *Tennessee v. John Scopes*, which journalist H.L. Mencken famously dubbed the “Monkey Trial,” began in May 1925.

Defense lawyer Clarence Darrow hoped to convince the judge to find the Butler Act unconstitutional according to the “establishment clause” of the First Amendment, which stated that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Instead, a jury convicted Scopes of violating the Butler Act on July 21, 1925; Judge John Raulston fined him \$100. [2]

Other states meanwhile instituted similar bans on teaching evolution. [3] The subject did not reappear in the courts for decades: Textbook publishers sidestepped the issue by leaving evolution mostly out of biology books. [4] But a wave of court cases in the 1960s and '70s affirmed evolution's place in public schools. In 1968, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Epperson v. Arkansas* struck down evolution-banning statutes nationwide, declaring them “products of fundamentalist sectarian conviction.”

The 1970s saw the emergence of “creation science,” whose proponents claimed that scientific evidence supported the Bible's account of creation. As a scientific theory that competed with evolution, they argued, creation science deserved a place alongside evolution in science curricula. Creation science advocates promoted laws mandating equal time in science classes for creation science and evolution—and were successful in at least 23 states. [5] In 1987, the Supreme Court in the case *Edwards v. Aguillard*

banned these laws, too, as an unconstitutional promotion of religion .

[1] Butler Act, cited in Noah Adams, "Timeline: Remembering the Scopes Monkey Trial," All Things Considered , July 5, 2005.

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[3] Noah Adams, "Timeline: Remembering the Scopes Monkey Trial," All Things Considered , July 5, 2005.

[4] Margaret Talbot, "Darwin in the Dock," New Yorker , December 5, 2005.

[5] Eugenie Scott, Expert Witness Statement, Selman v. Cobb County , November 17, 2006.

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God and Darwin: The York Daily Record and the Intelligent Design Trial

Abstract

CSJ-09-0020.0 This case examines the challenge of providing balanced coverage of a court case when the trial is about science, and the reporter believes the science on one side is flawed. In September 2005, York Daily Record reporter Lauri Lebo was assigned to cover a nationally watched local trial, *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*. It pitted the School Board against a group of 11 parents, who had sued because the board had required that 9th graders be read a statement asserting that evolution was just one of several theories—another being “intelligent design”—explaining the origin and development of life on earth. The case examines Lebo’s doubts about her ability to judge the credibility of competing scientific theories, her efforts to educate herself, and the fine line she had to walk in accommodating her own principles with those of her editors, who were mindful of the conservative community the paper served.

The class will examine the exacting art of science reporting—what words to choose, what context to provide, and what constitutes fair and balanced coverage. Students will come to grips with the difficulties of describing dispassionately a scientific theory which has been widely discredited, although it continues to attract some passionate adherents. The science reporting dilemma is only enhanced by the fact that the science is the subject of a trial; ordinarily, reporters give equal weight to both parties to a trial. Students can also discuss what a reporter can do when her approach to a story differs from that of her editors. Finally, they can debate the proper role of a newspaper serving its local community—to reflect local mores and values, or to challenge them?

The case can be used in a course or class on science reporting; on court reporting; or on local media.

Credits:

This case was written by Kathleen Gilsinan for the Knight Case Studies Initiative, Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia University. The faculty sponsor was Assistant Professor Marguerite Holloway. Funding was provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. (0609)

For further information:

E-mail: ccnmtl+casestudies@columbia.edu

Website: <https://casestudies.ccnmtl.columbia.edu>

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In fall 2004, the school board in the small town of Dover, Pennsylvania voted to require that ninth-grade students be read a statement about gaps in evolutionary theory prior to the evolution section of the curriculum. Students were to be told evolution was just one of several theories explaining the origin and development of life on earth, and to consider alternatives—specifically a theory called “intelligent design,” which posited that an “intelligent agent” was responsible for certain “irreducibly complex” features of some organisms. In response, 11 Dover parents sued the school district. The resulting trial, *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, was a national news event with the potential to redefine how science would be taught in schools.

But it was also a divisive local issue in Dover, whose school district encompassed a community of 24,000 in a rural southern corner of the state. At a local paper, the *York Daily Record*, education reporter Lauri Lebo struggled with how to cover the trial. Though she had never been a science reporter, she soon learned that there existed virtually no controversy among scientists that evolution by natural selection represented the best explanation of how earth's species developed. Yet the controversy over teaching evolution in high school biology was what made the subject newsworthy. How could Lebo cover both sides of the controversy in a neutral tone while staying true to the science? Was it best to frame it as a political story, a science story, or a courthouse story—and what did the answer say about how she should write it?

Lebo tried to educate herself as thoroughly as she could about the science behind the debate. By the time the trial began in September 2005, she had become confident in the subject, and ever more convinced that few scientists doubted Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. In fact, as she had found out, the theory was the basis of modern biology. Yet she faced resistance from editors who felt she should present a more balanced picture and devote more coverage to holes in evolutionary theory.

On October 18, Lebo watched in court as the foremost expert on intelligent design fared poorly under cross-examination. The plaintiffs' attorney had, in Lebo's view, revealed

devastating weaknesses in his theory. She returned to the newsroom that evening to chronicle the day's events.

Lebo carefully considered how she should write her story. During the first week of the trial, the plaintiffs had presented their case that the theory of intelligent design violated the very definition of science and was an illegal attempt to introduce religious instruction into science classes. Decades of court precedent had affirmed evolution's place in public schools and overruled attempts to teach alternatives based on the Bible's account of life's creation. The plaintiffs' attorneys had tried to show that intelligent design was simply the biblical creation story dressed up as science. Lebo had covered their arguments with interest.

Now, however, it was the defense's turn to present its case. Lebo was convinced that the scientific evidence was on evolution's side, but was it her job to judge the legal evidence? In court, each side of a case was supposed to receive an equal chance to speak, and perhaps the same was true of the journalism about that case. But Lebo felt that it was misleading to present a balanced picture of a debate she viewed as lopsided. On the other hand, she knew that editors felt her coverage had leaned too far to the pro-evolution side, and she worried that if she emphasized the defense's poor showing, editors or readers might accuse her of partisanship. In the worst case, an editor might take her off the story altogether. What was a fair way to cover the defense? Should she simply describe the arguments presented that day, as she had during the plaintiffs' portion of the trial? Could she give an accurate picture without picking sides in a cultural battle playing out in her town?

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York's Newspapers

Dover was a small town in York County, a largely rural, working-class corner of southeast Pennsylvania. The county was unusual for having two local newspapers. Buckner News Alliances York Daily Record was the larger of the two, printed on mornings Monday through Saturday, with a weekday circulation near 47,000. MediaNews owned the York Dispatch , which was printed Monday through Friday afternoons, with a smaller weekday circulation slightly over 37,000. The Dispatch also published a Sunday paper, the York Sunday News . Since 1990, the two papers had been produced under a Joint Operating Agreement (JOA), which allowed two competing papers to share printing, advertising, and distribution resources. In 1996, Buckner News Alliance and MediaNews amended the JOA to give MediaNews the right to buy the larger York Daily Record .

In 2004, MediaNews prepared to exercise its option to buy the York Daily Record , but federal ownership laws required it to sell the York Dispatch first. In May, MediaNews found a solution: It would switch ownership with Buckner News Alliance, assuming control of the York Daily Record and keeping the York Sunday News while Buckner News Alliance acquired the York Dispatch . [1] On May 5, 2004, York Dispatch Special Projects Reporter Lauri Lebo arrived at work, and was instructed along with 18 other reporters to gather her things and go to work for the competition, about half a mile down the road. We looked around and we realized the newsroom had been gutted. It was awful, and people started crying, Lebo recalls. [2]

Listen to Lebo discuss the ownership change at York's newspapers.

York Daily Record. The paper Lebo was to join had a centrist editorial stance in a solidly Republican county. Its predecessor, the Gazette and Daily , had been founded as a Democratic newspaper and had once refused advertising from Republican Barry Goldwaters presidential campaign out of a conviction that Goldwater would make a poor president. But in 1984, the Gazette and Daily s successor paper, the York Daily Record , broke with its Democratic history when it endorsed Republican candidate Ronald Reagan for president. [3] Since then, the four-member editorial boardconsisting of the overall editor, the editorial page editor, the publisher, and a rotating fourth memberhad steered a middle political road.

As a consequence of the 2004 ownership switch, York Daily Record Managing Editor Jim McClure became editor, replacing Editor Dennis Hetzel, who explained to the papers staff that his priorities conflicted with those of the papers new owner.

MediaNews Vice Chairman and CEO William Dean Singleton felt that the York Daily Record , the morning newspaper he had acquired, had more potential for growth than did the York Dispatch , the afternoon paper he had owned; he hoped to expand the Daily Record s coverage area south and west of York to push circulation close to 50,000. Editor Hetzel remarked to the York Daily Record about his resignation and the change in ownership: I think it will be as seamless of a transition as it can be. I think its probably a bigger deal for the people in the two newsrooms than it should be for the readers. [4]

Lebos move. Reporter Lebo had been a journalist for 15 years and, as special projects reporter for the Dispatch , she had taken part in a 2000 investigation that spurred a new criminal investigation of two Civil Rights-era murders. Race riots had exploded in York in 1969, when a black mob had killed a white police officer. [5] One reporter on Lebos team had discovered that Yorks mayor, Charles Robertson, then a police officer, had handed out ammunition to white gangs and encouraged them to kill in retaliation as many black people as they could find. The report led to Robertsons arrest.

Lebo was instructed to join the Daily Record as the chief education reporter, and she chafed at her new assignment as she adjusted to a new cast of editors. I didnt feel that education was a substantial beat, she says. One of my first assignments was to cover a high school graduation. But one morning in June 2004, she picked up the Daily Record and a freelancers routine story about a school board meeting caught her eye.

[1] Michelle Starr and Sharon Smith, Newspaper ownership changes hands in York; MediaNews Group bought the Daily Record and Phil Buckner bought the Dispatch, York Daily Record , May 6, 2004.

[2] Authors interview with Lauri Lebo, on February 2, 2009, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. All further quotes from Lebo, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

[3] Jim McClure, In recent years, York County presidential endorsements a mixed bag, York Town Square [a York Daily Record blog], October 25, 2008.

[4] Michelle Starr and Sharon Smith, Newspaper ownership changes hands in York; MediaNews Group bought the Daily Record and Phil Buckner bought the Dispatch.

[5] Daniel J. Wakin, York, Pa., Mayor is Arrested in 1969 Racial Killing, May 18, 2001.

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Alan Bonsell.
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In 2004, there were three self-identified fundamentalist Christians on Dover's nine-member school board. One of them, a retired police officer named Bill Buckingham, headed the curriculum committee. Another had before joining the board circulated a petition (which attracted 1,500 signatures) calling for prayer to be reinstated in Dover's public schools as a way to mitigate the trauma of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. But the board, reluctant to trigger the controversy inherent in public school prayer, had instituted instead a moment of silence after the Pledge of Allegiance. Alan Bonsell, the board's head, was also a fundamentalist Christian and an avowed creationist—someone who believes that the world was created as described in the Bible. [1]

Bill Buckingham.
© NOVA

Bonsell and Buckingham had privately discussed their belief that creationism had a place alongside evolution in Dover public school science classes. The issue became news, however, in a public school board meeting on June 7, 2004. A Dover resident, herself a former member of the school board, had asked when the board would approve the purchase of new high school biology textbooks. Curriculum Head Buckingham

responded that he would not approve the standard biology textbook proposed by the district's science teachers; it was "laced with Darwinism," he said, adding that he was seeking a book that gave creationism a fair hearing.

Joe Maldonado of the York Daily Record witnessed the exchange. He was a stringer—a part-time correspondent paid by the story—and he had been covering Dover and its school board meetings for years. Heidi Bernard-Bubb, a stringer for the competing York Dispatch, was also present. Both knew that Buckingham might just have ignited a severe controversy in a small town. Lebo read Maldonado's coverage of the meeting in the Daily Record the next day and decided to keep an eye on the issue. [2]

Sure enough, the next public school board meeting on June 14 was packed with Dover residents who had read newspaper accounts of the previous meeting. Curriculum Head Buckingham reiterated his skepticism about Darwinism, and argued that there was nothing illegal about teaching creationism alongside it. "Nowhere in the Constitution does it call for separation of Church and State," he said. [3]

Audience members were divided in their reactions. Several religious attendees applauded Buckingham's support for teaching creationism. Bertha Spahr, veteran science teacher and head of Dover High School's science department, rose to say that her teachers tried to be sensitive to students' religious beliefs. The school had requested the "least offensive" biology textbook they could find, she said. Buckingham responded: "Two thousand years ago, someone died on the cross. Won't somebody stand up for him?" [4]

Maldonado continued to cover the suddenly-dramatic school board meetings. Lebo, the reporter in charge of the education beat, sensed a larger story emerging. She had kept in regular contact with board members since assuming her new beat a month before, and she now began to press Curriculum Head Buckingham and School Board Head Bonsell about their creationist beliefs. Both told her frankly that they did not believe in evolution and were seeking a legal way to teach alternative theories that accommodated their religious beliefs.

[1] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* (The New Press: New York), 2008, p. 11, 13-14, 21.

[2] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover*, p. 22-23.

[3] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover*, p. 24.

[4] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover*, p. 24.

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The first time Lebo heard the phrase “intelligent design” was a month after she had started tracking Maldonado’s reporting on the school board meetings. At a meeting on July 12, 2004, Maldonado noticed a sudden shift in rhetoric. Curriculum Head Buckingham did not once use the word “creationism,” as he had in previous meetings. He was now talking about intelligent design as the alternative to evolution he hoped Dover teachers would embrace. Maldonado later recalled:

[The meeting was] a whole lot less Christian and a whole lot more scientific sounding. They were no longer talking about taking a stand for Jesus. It was about taking a stand for our children’s education. [1]

When Maldonado visited the Daily Record office on July 13, the day after the meeting, he stopped by Lebo’s desk for a chat. She was intrigued by what he had noticed. She was skeptical about Buckingham’s intentions but, without much background in evolutionary theory, she was curious whether “intelligent design” was a valid theory that could bridge the seeming conflict between science and religion. If scientists had found evidence of the hand of God in biology, that would certainly be newsworthy, and even worth discussing in science class. Lebo decided to dig deeper; the theory might deserve its own story. She typed “intelligent design” into a search engine.

At first, there seemed to Lebo nothing objectionable about the theory, though the

specifics were laden with scientific and mathematical jargon and somewhat confusing. She found a wealth of information at the website of the Seattle-based Discovery Institute, the largest pro-intelligent design organization in the country. The theorists quoted on the site emphasized the scientific nature of intelligent design—and the theory certainly seemed much more detailed and complex than the simple biblical narrative in which God created the world in six days. William Dembski, a mathematician and philosopher at Baylor University who had written a 1998 book on intelligent design, summarized intelligent design on a section of the website:

Intelligent design begins with a seemingly innocuous question: Can objects, even if nothing is known about how they arose, exhibit features that reliably signal the action of an intelligent cause?... Designed objects like Mount Rushmore exhibit characteristic features or patterns that point to an intelligence. Such features or patterns constitute signs of intelligence . Proponents of intelligent design, known as design theorists, purport to study such signs formally, rigorously, and scientifically. Intelligent design may therefore be defined as the science that studies signs of intelligence. [2]

That seemed reasonable to Lebo. But she had never been a science reporter, and she was aware that she would have to research both evolution and intelligent design thoroughly to understand the terms of the debate. “I didn’t know [anything] about science at that point... The whole issue of evolution... I accepted it, but I didn’t really know what it meant,” she recalls.

She sought the help of a colleague and friend, Marc Charisse, who had been her editor at the York Dispatch and had moved with her to the Daily Record . Charisse was a former academic with a PhD in First Amendment Law. He had also read widely on evolutionary theory, though intelligent design was new to him, too. Lebo and Charisse had desks close to one another in the newsroom, and as Lebo began to research evolution and intelligent design through the summer of 2004, they had almost daily conversations about the legal, philosophical, and scientific issues surrounding journalism at the intersection of science, religion, education, and law. At the same time, Lebo tried to read as much as she could find about evolution and the new theory that had arisen to challenge it. After full days at work, she would return home and read late into the evening. Through her conversations with Charisse and her research, Lebo became more and more convinced that evolution and its newest critics deserved their own story in the Daily Record . “By late July 2004, I was obsessed,” she recalls.

[1] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 30.

[2] William Dembski, “Intelligent Design,” in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion* , 2 nd ed. (Macmillan Reference USA: Woodbridge, CT), 2004.

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Charles Darwin.

Charles Darwin, a 19th-century British naturalist, was not the first to argue that species changed—sometimes into entirely different species—over time. He was, however, the first to publish an explanation of how it worked. Darwin's theory of "natural selection" proposed that in competition for scarce resources, species with features better suited to their environment flourished and reproduced, passing on their advantageous characteristics to their offspring, while species without such advantages eventually died out. Darwin published his findings in *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. He concluded that "species have been modified, during a long course of descent, chiefly through the natural selection of numerous successive, slight, favorable variations." [1] This, he argued, accounted for the wide variety of species on earth, which he claimed had originated millions of years ago from a single ancestor.

He was aware that this idea would draw fierce resistance, as it challenged the Bible's story of life's origins as laid out in the book of Genesis. The Bible said that God had created all animals in their present form in a period of six days, culminating with the creation of man and woman, Adam and Eve. The idea that animals—including humans—had developed over millions of years from a series of random mutations that

avored some species while others vanished from the face of the globe challenged not only the narrative of the creation story but also the very idea of God as a benevolent, purposeful agent watching over all life forms from the heavens. The backlash was immediate and lasting.

[1] Charles Darwin, cited in Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Basic Books: New York), 2006, p. 17.

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A legal history of evolution

Evolution became a subject of bitter debate—and litigation—in the US as it slowly crept into science textbooks. By the 1920s, groups whose faith led them to understand the Bible as a literal account of events took their objections to Darwin's theory to state legislatures in an effort to limit or ban school instruction in evolution. Traditionally, curriculum in the US was decided by each school district; there was no national requirement. Thus, teaching practices varied widely from state to state, as well as within state boundaries.

John Scopes in 1925.

In 1925, Tennessee became the first state to ban the teaching of evolution entirely from public school science classrooms. The Tennessee Anti-Evolution Act, also known as the Butler Act after the legislator who wrote it, proscribed teaching “any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and [teaching] instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.” [1] Eager to test the law’s constitutionality in court, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) recruited a 24-year-old teacher named John Thomas Scopes to be indicted for violating the law. (Scopes was a substitute biology teacher who could not recall whether he had actually taught evolution.) The trial of Tennessee v. John Scopes , which journalist H.L. Mencken famously dubbed the “Monkey Trial,” began in May 1925.

Defense lawyer Clarence Darrow hoped to convince the judge to find the Butler Act unconstitutional according to the “establishment clause” of the First Amendment, which stated that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Instead, a jury convicted Scopes of violating the Butler Act on July 21, 1925; Judge John Raulston fined him \$100. [2]

Other states meanwhile instituted similar bans on teaching evolution. [3] The subject did not reappear in the courts for decades: Textbook publishers sidestepped the issue by leaving evolution mostly out of biology books. [4] But a wave of court cases in the 1960s and ‘70s affirmed evolution’s place in public schools. In 1968, the Supreme Court’s ruling in Epperson v. Arkansas struck down evolution-banning statutes nationwide, declaring them “products of fundamentalist sectarian conviction.”

The 1970s saw the emergence of “creation science,” whose proponents claimed that scientific evidence supported the Bible’s account of creation. As a scientific theory that competed with evolution, they argued, creation science deserved a place alongside evolution in science curricula. Creation science advocates promoted laws mandating equal time in science classes for creation science and evolution—and were successful in at least 23 states. [5] In 1987, the Supreme Court in the case Edwards v. Aguillard banned these laws, too, as an unconstitutional promotion of religion .

[1] Butler Act, cited in Noah Adams, “Timeline: Remembering the Scopes Monkey Trial,” All Things Considered , July 5, 2005.

[2] Douglas Linder, “The Scopes Trial: An Introduction,” Famous Trials [website], University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1995-2007. In Scopes’ 1927 appeal, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled that the Butler Act did not violate the establishment clause, but overturned Scopes’ conviction on a technicality.

[3] Noah Adams, “Timeline: Remembering the Scopes Monkey Trial,” All Things

Considered , July 5, 2005.

[4] Margaret Talbot, "Darwin in the Dock," New Yorker , December 5, 2005.

[5] Eugenie Scott, Expert Witness Statement, Selman v. Cobb County , November 17, 2006.

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Intelligent Design

In the wake of *Edwards v. Aguillard* , the Institute for Creation Research, then the largest US organization dedicated to creation science, encouraged its allies and advocates to change course. The Institute urged science teachers to expose students to evidence against evolution—on the assumption that such evidence would naturally point toward a creationist explanation of life on earth, even if “creationism” itself could not be taught in public school. Anti-evolutionists also encouraged instructors to emphasize that evolution was a theory rather than a hard fact. Scientists argued, however, that the use of the terms “theory” and “fact” as contrasting forms of knowledge was misleading. One expert noted:

The scientific term with the greatest difference in usage between the public and scientists is the term “theory,” which means “guess” or “hunch” to members of the public, and something far more important to scientists. In science, a theory is a logical construct of facts, laws, and tested hypotheses that explain a natural phenomenon. The proper synonym for theory—used in the scientific sense—therefore is “explanation,” rather than “guess.” Because evolution is a well-established scientific theory—in the sense of an explanation—it is no more a guess than the theory of gravitation or the theory of the atom. [1]

Of Pandas and People textbook.
Courtesy National Center for Science Education

In 1989, the Texas-based Foundation for Thought and Ethics published a textbook, *Of Pandas and People*, in another challenge to evolution. The book contrasted evolution with the alternative theory of intelligent design. The theory posited that certain features of life on earth—such as the eye and the immune system—were so complex that they could not have emerged through a series of successive mutations alone. Such complexity indicated the guiding hand of a designer or intelligent supernatural force. A spokesman for the pro-intelligent design Discovery Institute explained that while many intelligent-design proponents believed the designer was God, “a person could logically argue that some sort of human has been able to design features of life working through time travel... and some people say aliens are the designer.” [2]

Meanwhile, the controversy over evolution again reappeared in court. In 2002, the school board in Cobb County, Georgia mandated that disclaimer stickers be placed on high school biology textbooks. The stickers read:

This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered. [3]

Six parents and the ACLU sued. The case had yet to be decided in 2004. [4] At the same time, school boards in many other states were exploring their own new challenges to evolution. [5] The Dover school board was about to become one of them. On August 3, 2004, the board approved by a vote of 5-3, with one abstention, the biology textbook that Curriculum Head Buckingham had dismissed as “laced with Darwinism” in June. Both Buckingham and School Board Head Bonsell voted against the book; Buckingham said that he would introduce a motion, perhaps in September, to have the board approve the intelligent design textbook *Of Pandas and People* as a companion to the biology text. [6]

[1] Eugenie Scott, Expert Witness Statement, *Selman v. Cobb County*, November 17, 2006.

[2] Laurel Rosen, "Darwin Faces a New Rival," Sacramento Bee , June 22, 2003. Quoted in Eugenie Scott, Expert Witness Statement, Selman v. Cobb County , November 17, 2006.

[3] Associated Press, "Judge nixes evolution textbook stickers," January 13, 2005.

[4] This ruling was appealed, remanded back to the district court on a technicality, then settled in favor of the plaintiffs.

[5] Laura Parker, "School science debate has evolved," USA Today , November 29, 2004.

[6] Joseph Maldonado, "Biology book squeaked by; Dover area school's debate included accusations of blackmail." York Daily Record, August 4, 2004.

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When science meets politics

As Dover's school board deliberated textbook choices during the summer of 2004, evolution wasn't the only scientific concept under debate in the public sphere. Far from

existing in an inviolable realm of pure fact, scientific subjects such as environmentalism and global warming, stem cell research, and evolution were political battlegrounds during the heated presidential election then underway. A voter's perspective on such issues moreover tended to correlate with his or her party affiliation. Thus in declaring that scientific data firmly supported a given conclusion, journalists risked implicitly aligning themselves with a political party.

Stem cell research, for example, posed unique reporting challenges. Embryonic stem cells could be programmed to grow into many different kinds of cells, potentially providing a way to regrow tissue damaged by such diseases as Parkinson's and diabetes, perhaps eventually curing them. In 2001, President George W. Bush limited funding for stem cell research, restricting it to existing lines of stem cells and forbidding the production of new ones—which required the destruction of human embryos. His Democratic opponent in the 2004 presidential election, John Kerry, vowed to lift the restrictions.

Opponents of embryonic stem cell research argued that it was unproven to provide the cures its proponents promised, and that the ethical problems of destroying human embryos outweighed the potential benefits of the research. This side included evangelical Christians who believed life began as soon as an embryo formed—but moral and ethical objections to embryonic stem cell research were by no means the exclusive province of the religious. The research's proponents, meanwhile, among them Democratic candidate Kerry, chided the Bush administration's seemingly hostile attitude toward scientific evidence supporting man-made global warming, and pointed to the stem cell debate as another instance in which the President and his party placed ideology above scientific evidence. At the same time, some of the scientists who touted embryonic stem cell research's benefits stood to gain financially from grants to conduct the research. Reporters covering the story were thrust into a thicket of competing interests.

The stem cell debate crystallized many of the challenges facing science journalists more generally. Science reporters—even those who covered science exclusively—were often plunged into subjects in which they had little or no expertise and expected to evaluate competing claims fairly. They were forced to rely on experts with unclear political, personal, and financial motivations of their own in negotiating what one writer called “the widening gap in knowledge between the scientific expert and the layman,” trying to package information from the former for consumption by the latter. Furthermore, this writer continued:

The vulnerability of science journalists converges with the economic and social constraints of newswork to give an unusual degree of power to those best organized to provide technical information in a manageable and efficiently packaged form. [1]

Kerry and Bush had staked out opposite sides in several other scientific matters, among them intelligent design. Bush argued that, as a critique of a scientific theory, intelligent design deserved a fair hearing in classrooms. Kerry maintained that “ideology should

not trump science in the context of educating our children,” but said it was ultimately up to local communities to set their own curricula. [2]

The Dover school board would soon do so.

[1] Dorothy Nelkin, *Selling Science* (W.H. Freeman and Company: New York), 1995, p. 80, 123.

[2] “Bush and Kerry offer their views on science,” *Science*, October 1, 2004.

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September story

Curriculum Head Buckingham's plan to introduce the intelligent-design textbook *Of Pandas and People* into Dover High School seemed to Lebo a good opportunity to write a piece explaining intelligent design to readers. As she spoke to experts in the fields of evolution and intelligent design, she was acutely conscious of her own lack of expertise in either subject. That made it difficult to assess the credibility of her sources. She notes:

You do want to be fair. You don't want to say that somebody has a lock on truth. At first, you keep giving everybody the benefit of the doubt. If you don't know your subject, it's scary. You don't want to get stuff wrong. So you do play it cautious and let them do most of the talking.

But over her months of reporting, she became more and more convinced that most scientists, even if they criticized the theory of natural selection as specifically laid out by Darwin, accepted the basic premise of evolution. Several scientists Lebo found at universities around the country echoed the sentiment. She found the evolutionary biologists she interviewed patient in explaining the subject to her particularly Kenneth Miller, a Brown University biologist who had written the textbook the board had adopted.

She found intelligent design scientists at the Discovery Institute noticeably less helpful, however. She recalls:

Gradually I started to pick up that whenever I'd ask the Discovery Institute these questions [about their theory], they'd recite the same words back and it seemed like they were trying to use long words. And so it was always this sort of weird feeling that I don't think you guys are being straight with me. I'm supposed to be alert to this. But when you're working in a subject that's way over your head, it's kind of hard to [tell].

She grew suspicious that the intelligent design theorists she interviewed were being at best disingenuous, and at worst misleading. In particular, the theorists she interviewed seemed unable to explain to her how intelligent design worked, at least in a way that she could understand. Evolutionary biologists like Miller provided detailed explanations of natural selection, the mechanism through which evolution worked but Lebo was unable to identify from her interviews a parallel mechanism for how intelligent design played out in nature. Did the designer fashion each individual in a species, or just the first? Was the designer responsible for gradual changes over time, or only the sudden emergence of complex features?

By September, two months after she had first heard of intelligent design, Lebo felt comfortable enough with her knowledge of the topic to write a story explaining both sides of the debate. She and her colleague Charisse discussed how she should write it. It would be a difficult story. Lebo would have to explain complex concepts in readable prose, hopefully without oversimplifying to the point of inaccuracy. More complicated still was the issue of how to present both sides of the debate. Should she devote half the article to intelligent design proponents' claims and the other half to the clear majority of scientists who supported evolution? Or should she organize her story to reflect the lopsidedness of the debate? How could she cover fairly a real political and educational controversy in her community while staying true to the science?

Just the way the words sound to us, intelligent design, seemed to make a lot of sense and not really be very arguable, Charisse says. I mean the idea that the wonder of creation might encourage one to believe in a creator. I mean, heck, that's in Darwin. [1] He encouraged Lebo to try to make sense out of intelligent design proponents

arguments, and to be fair to them even if she disagreed. At the same time, Lebo and Charisse discussed whether fairness and accuracy were sometimes at odds. They considered various hypothetical reporting challenges: If people who believed the earth was flat were holding a seminar in York, should reporters cover it as they would any other science seminar? How should one report on historians who denied the Holocaust? Did they, too, deserve fair treatment? Charisse says:

My notion has always been well, put them out there and debate them and be willing to defend truth in the marketplace of ideas. But the other side is that, do you not give some credence to an otherwise absurd idea just by being willing to sit down and debate it? Arent there some ideas that are just so out there and ludicrous that what serves the higher truth, if you will, is to say no, Im not going to debate that with you. Thats absurd.

There was also the more concrete issue of how the Daily Record s readers would receive Lebos coverage. If religious readers perceived her story as biased in favor of evolution regardless of the evidence she presented in its favor she risked alienating a large section of the Daily Record s readership. On the other hand, being too receptive to intelligent design could sacrifice accuracy and draw ire from the other direction. Charisse says:

There are stories that, whatever your personal opinion of them you know theyre going to cause you grief in your market Theres no winning there No matter what you do, youre going to get raked over the coals.

Listen to Charisse describe guiding Lebo on her first intelligent design story.

Lebo decided to give a balanced description of the debate over Buckingham's proposal to teach intelligent design. She presented an example from the intelligent design textbook *Of Pandas and People* to illustrate the argument in favor of the theory, which she described as the idea that all life was created by a divine being. The book's authors, Percival Davis and Dean Kenyon both biology professors, creationists, and intelligent design proponents pointed to the giraffe's neck as evidence of design. Lebo wrote:

The book argues that the giraffe's long neck depends on a series of integrated adaptations that could not have happened separately, so they must have been present from the beginning of the species existence. A giraffe's circulatory system includes a coordinated system of blood pressure controls. The book says pressure sensors along the neck's arteries monitor the blood pressure and activate contraction of the artery walls. The complex circulatory system of the giraffe must appear at the same time as its long neck or the animal will not survive, authors Percival Davis and Dean Kenyon write. [2]

Lebo noted that supporters of teaching creationism say [Dover's debate over evolution is] about fairness, giving equal time to competing theories. But she also quoted extensively from evolutionary biologists she had interviewed. One of them, John Staver, director of science education at Kansas State University, said that since intelligent

design theory could not be tested by replicable experiments, it was not science; he further noted that there was little controversy about evolution among scientists. Staver suggested: ID [intelligent design] folks are appealing to a public that we know has a relatively low level of scientific literacy. [3]

Lebo and Charisse felt the piece was informative and fair. Lebo's primary editor on the story, Special Projects Editor Scott Blanchard, had few criticisms and did not change the story significantly. It ran on September 5.

Shortly after the story ran, the National Center for Science Education, a non-profit institution devoted to fighting challenges to teaching evolution, contacted Lebo with suggestions for further reporting and an offer to be a resource. Director Eugenie Scott told her that evolution was the foundation of modern biology that was why the stakes of the educational debate were so high. None of the rest of biology made sense except in light of evolution, Scott argued, and if students did not receive a firm grounding in the scientific consensus on the matter, the rest of their biology education could suffer.

[1] Authors phone interview with Marc Charisse, on February 17, 2009. All further quotes from Charisse, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

[2] Lauri Lebo, An evolving controversy; Dispute over teaching about the origins of life is likely to flare again this week, York Daily Record , September 5, 2004.

[3] Lauri Lebo, An evolving controversy; Dispute over teaching about the origins of life is likely to flare again this week.

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Dover Area High School.

In early October, an anonymous donor gave 50 copies of the intelligent design textbook *Of Pandas and People* to the Dover Area School District. School Superintendent Richard Nilsen approved the book's use as a reference material; because doing so was not a curriculum change, it did not require the school board's approval. Two weeks later, on October 18, 2004, School Board Head Bonsell moved to change the ninth grade biology curriculum slightly—adding the sentence: "Students will be made aware of the gaps/problems in Darwin's theory and of other theories of evolution, including, but not limited to, intelligent design." The motion passed 6-3. [1] Reporter Maldonado wrote about the meeting for the next day's paper, noting that a district biology teacher, Jen Miller, was concerned about being required to teach intelligent design.

On November 19, the school board issued a press release saying that the press—Lebo and Maldonado included—had gotten it wrong. The board had no intention of mandating the "teaching" of intelligent design; rather, they wanted students to be "made aware" of the concept. At the same time, the board released a four-paragraph statement with which they now expected teachers to introduce the evolution section of the curriculum, coming up in January. The statement pointed to "gaps in [Darwin's] theory... for which there is no evidence." It also noted:

Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin's view. The reference book *Of Pandas and People* is available in the library along with other resources for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves.

The statement stopped short of defining intelligent design. Less than a month later, on December 14, 2004, 11 Dover parents and the ACLU filed a lawsuit to fight the curriculum change. They sought to prove that intelligent design was an attempt to introduce religion into science classrooms, and was therefore a violation of the First Amendment's establishment clause. They planned to do so by proving that intelligent design was simply another name for creation science, whose place in public schools the courts had repudiated in 1987. Close on the heels of a divisive US presidential election in which Republicans had prevailed, the lawsuit attracted national media attention. Lebo later recalled: "The school district became a mirror to what was playing out across the

country that autumn.” [2]

The school board’s statement was due to be read when Dover students reached the evolution section of the curriculum on January 13, 2005—in one month. There was no way the lawsuit would be brought to trial and resolved by then. But the plaintiffs had the option of asking a judge for an injunction against the curriculum change. Meanwhile, on Thursday, January 1, all but one of the teachers in the Dover High School science department signed a letter refusing to read the statement.

[1] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 45-46.

[2] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 59.

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Covering the controversy

As Lebo covered the lawsuit and its participants, she had gradually begun to write with more authority, and did not feel she needed to back up as many assertions with quotes or with references to what “scientists say.” Now convinced of the truth of the broad

outlines of the theory of evolution by natural selection, she struggled to construct her stories in a way that would acknowledge the controversy without seeming to give equal scientific weight to intelligent design, which she now saw as poorly disguised creationism.

Lebo wrote, edited, and rewrote with an attentive eye to the macro-structure of her articles, as well as the implications of individual words. Was it fair to compare intelligent design to creationism when that would anticipate the opinion sought in the lawsuit just filed? Was it accurate not to, given that Bonsell and Buckingham had openly discussed their creationist beliefs with her? What about the distinction the school board insisted on between the words “teach” and “make aware?” Which was more accurate? Did intelligent design violate the definition of “science,” as its critics claimed? In a devout community skeptical about evolution, how could she dispute the evidence for intelligent design without seeming to attack religion?

The actual trial was still months away. On January 6, lawyers for the plaintiffs deposed members of the school board. Curriculum Head Buckingham, pressed about his June and July statements supporting incorporating creationism into the science curriculum, denied having made them. Board Head Bonsell and Superintendent Nilsen denied having heard them. This directly contradicted two newspaper accounts of the event, Maldonado’s in the York Daily Record and Bernard-Bubb’s in the York Dispatch . [1]

Lebo was on vacation in Seattle as the story unfolded. Another reporter, Teresa Boeckel, had been assigned to cover it. When Lebo accessed the story on the Daily Record’s website on January 7, she was incensed by Boeckel’s balanced treatment of a statement Lebo felt was clearly a lie. “They denied what our reporters had printed,” Lebo recalls. Boeckel began the story with Richard Thompson, a lawyer for the Dover Area School District, calling it a “good sign” that lawyers for the plaintiffs had opted not to file an injunction to stop the board from implementing its new policy. “After several days of depositions it became clear that they simply did not have a strong enough case to ask that the policy be blocked,” Thompson said. “Clearly, if they thought they could have succeeded, they would have asked the court to stop the policy before it was implemented.” [2]

Boeckel wrote that Buckingham’s statements before the school board were “in dispute.” Lebo felt that was generous to the point of being misleading. She felt that board members were lying under oath—based not only on Maldonado’s reporting, which she trusted, but also on her own conversations with Buckingham and Bonsell. “I just remember thinking this is not a fair story, [because] it’s perfectly balanced,” she recalls. Looking back on her own coverage, she immediately regretted that she had not specifically used the word “creationism” in describing their stances on evolution education—it would have provided additional evidence to shore up Maldonado’s reporting.

Lebo returned to the paper the following week determined to prove that Bonsell and Buckingham had lied. She recalled the media attention the meetings had generated,

and contacted the local Fox affiliate to see if the station had a taped interview of Buckingham using the word “creationism.” They did. Lebo hurried to the studio to watch the tape, on which Buckingham stated: “We’re just looking for a textbook that balances the teaching of evolution with something else, like creationism.” [3]

She went directly back to the office to write her article. Again, she wrestled with word choice. Could she say that Bonsell and Buckingham had lied in their depositions? Was it too harsh, even if it was true? She settled for describing Buckingham’s denial that he had ever suggested teaching creationism at Dover High School, alongside evidence from Fox’s tape and previous news reports.

On January 18, 2005, Dover High School reached the evolution section of the science curriculum. Science teachers had refused to read the four-paragraph statement noting “gaps” in the theory of evolution by natural selection and pointing students to the intelligent design book *Of Pandas and People*; School Superintendent Richard Nilsen and Assistant Superintendent Michael Baksa did so in their place, then immediately left the classroom without taking questions. The Dover High School science teachers and close to a dozen students left the classroom in protest while the statement was read. [4]

Lebo was on hand after school to ask students how they felt about the controversy. One said he had not paid attention to the statement; a few expressed confusion about what intelligent design actually was, and wondered why Nilsen and Baksa had not allowed them to ask questions. Lebo wrote about their reactions for the next day’s paper.

[1] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 72-73.

[2] Teresa Ann Boeckel, “District lawyers see ‘good sign’; But lawyers for the parents said they can still prove their case.” *York Daily Record* , January 7, 2005.

[3] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 84.

[4] Lauri Lebo and Joe Maldonado, “Students miss ID idea; Dover Area school officials told students about intelligent design, then left,” *York Daily Record* , January 19, 2005.

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Holes in evolutionary theory?

The trial *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* was set to begin on September 25, 2005—over a year after the school board had touched off debate in their search for a new biology textbook. [1] Lebo had been immersed in scientific literature since the previous summer, and had been in regular contact with the Discovery Institute, the National Center for Science Education, and scientists at several universities and research institutions around the country. Bonsell and Buckingham, at the request of their lawyers, had stopped giving her interviews since their depositions.

As national media had turned their eyes toward Dover, Lebo had studied other reporters' strategies for writing about evolution and intelligent design. She particularly admired the writing of New York Times science reporter Cornelia Dean, who in covering challenges to evolution in a Kansas school district for her paper's science section that summer, had written:

Mainstream scientists say alternatives to evolution have repeatedly failed the tests of science, and the criticisms have been answered again and again. For scientists, there is no controversy. [2]

Lebo, however, had a different audience to serve. She was not a veteran science reporter like Cornelia Dean writing for people who were interested in science. She was a small-town reporter covering a real conflict in her community. Though she enjoyed considerable autonomy and had not encountered much interference from editors in her coverage, in August she got a hint that York Daily Record Editor McClure was not entirely happy with her approach.

Special Projects Editor Blanchard oversaw Lebo's day-to-day coverage of the story, and in August 2004, a month from the beginning of the trial, he told her Editor McClure wanted her to research and write a story exploring the holes in evolutionary theory.

Lebo felt the assignment was reasonable; she knew from her previous reporting that there was some debate among scientists about how evolution worked, though the vast majority of them accepted evolution itself. But she also suspected that McClure had other motives for assigning the story—that he was trying to impose balance on Lebo’s coverage of a debate her reporting told her was fundamentally unbalanced. Lebo recalls:

As I worked on the story, it kind of shifted and I simply wrote one that looked at the vacuousness of intelligent design. The main reason I did that was because, while questions remain about evolution, there is no question as to its validity and I had no intention of trying to raise questions about it in the interest of balance. I do remember consciously doing that. [3]

Lebo filed her story on August 13. That evening, Special Projects Editor Blanchard called her. He explained that what she had written did not make sense with the headline he wanted to use: “Are there holes in evolution theory? Some say they should be taught; others say there are no holes.” Blanchard suggested some changes that would emphasize more strongly the proponents of teaching “holes in evolution”—among them Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA), as well as 55% of US adults surveyed by Time Magazine the previous week. Lebo found the changes unobjectionable. The York Daily Record published the story on August 14, 2005.

[1] National Center for Science Education, *Kitzmiller v Dover* timeline , October 17, 2008.

[2] Cornelia Dean, “Opting out in the Debate on Evolution,” *New York Times* , June 21, 2005. Quoted in Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 95.

[3] Lauri Lebo’s email to author, March 4, 2009.

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Spotlight on Dover

As the trial approached, Dover's bitter divisions over science and religion were on full display. Letters from both sides of the debate had poured into the newspaper over the previous year, and it was the Daily Record's policy to publish as many as possible subject to space constraints. Between January 2004 and May 2005, the Daily Record had printed 168 letters, editorials, and op-eds relating to the controversy; the writers were divided almost exactly in half on the issue. (This was partly the result of editorial page editors' conscious effort to balance each op-ed on the controversy with another taking the opposite stance.) [1]

The four-member editorial board itself—which included Editor McClure and Editorial Page Editor Scott Fisher—had differing opinions on the merits of intelligent design, and so avoided taking a firm stance on the science. [2] But the editorial board repeatedly criticized the school board for subjecting the community to an expensive lawsuit. McClure and Fisher were also both apparently distressed not only because the lawsuit was the subject of such conflict in their small community, but also because Dover was now in the national spotlight and, they felt, being portrayed as a fundamentalist backwater. Comedy news program The Daily Show had showcased a mock special report called “Evolution Schmevolution” about the Dover controversy every night between September 12 and September 15. On September 18, Fisher wrote an editorial in response to the Daily Show feature:

“Evolution Schmevolution” made you laugh, it made you cry. It made you wonder why: Why is the Dover school board making us such a laughingstock? Why?

The Daily Record's smaller competitor and Lebo's former employer, the York Dispatch, had meanwhile taken a firm pro-evolution editorial stance. [3]

Lebo had so far written most of her stories with little interference from editors. She was a veteran reporter in charge of her own beat. But in a general newsroom conversation a few weeks before the trial was to begin, Managing Editor Randy Parker and Editor McClure reminded Lebo repeatedly of her obligation to remain “fair and balanced” during the trial. She shrugged off the advice, which she interpreted as a generic

comment on reporters' obligations in general. But she was aware that she would no longer be covering a science story, but a court story with each side presenting its case to a judge. The weight of the scientific evidence was on evolution's side, but what about the legal evidence?

[1] Chris Mooney and Matthew Nisbet, "Undoing Darwin," Columbia Journalism Review , September/October 2005.

[2] Chris Mooney and Matthew Nisbet, "Undoing Darwin."

[3] Chris Mooney and Matthew Nisbet, "Undoing Darwin."

« Holes in evolutionary theory?The trial: The plaintiffs' case »

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Lauri Lebo

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The trial: The plaintiffs' case

By the time the trial began on September 26, 2005, Lebo had spent more than a year trying to cover the story of intelligent design, evolution, and the lawsuit against the Dover school board from many different angles. She had filed stories on the subject almost weekly—sometimes more often depending on the pace of new developments in

the case. She had described how the Thomas More Law Center, which the school board hired to defend it in the lawsuit, advertised itself as a defender of Christian freedoms and championed “such issues as school prayer and ‘promoting public morality.’” [1] She had interviewed students about what they felt about the controversy. (Many were indifferent or thought the furor was “dumb,” though there was a handful of students on each side of the debate).

She had pointed out objections to the theory of intelligent design from scientists around the country, as well as representatives of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Associations for the Advancement of Science. Even the pro-intelligent design Discovery Institute, she reported, felt the Dover School Board was subjecting the theory to an unnecessary legal test, and did not support the board’s controversial curriculum. Lebo had also covered the result of a similar controversy in Cobb County, Georgia, where parents had sued the school board over textbook disclaimer stickers calling evolution “a theory, not a fact.” In January 2005, a judge had ordered the stickers removed. Lawyers for the Dover School Board said the decision had no bearing on the case in Dover, but lawyers for the plaintiffs said it set a helpful precedent. And in advance of Dover’s own trial, Lebo had described Dover residents’ feelings about intelligent design in their curriculum: 54 percent of them supported its inclusion. [2]

Kenneth Miller.
© University of Alabama

Now she would be filing daily stories from the courtroom. The first half of the trial would be devoted to the plaintiffs’ case, which began with testimony from the biologist and textbook author Kenneth Miller. Lebo chronicled Miller’s testimony about the flaws of intelligent design, how he reconciled his belief in evolution with his religious beliefs (he was a devout Catholic), and what he felt was the danger intelligent design posed to science education. She summarized plaintiffs’ attorney Eric Rothschild’s opening statements, in which he argued that the school board was violating the First Amendment by trying to introduce religion into the classroom. She also quoted defense attorney Patrick Gillen’s counterargument that the board was only trying to “advance science, not religion.” [3] Her first article on the trial began:

Dover school district's attorneys call the mention of intelligent design in the school district's biology curriculum "a modest change." But Ken Miller fears a four-paragraph statement mentioning the concept might force students to choose between God and science.

She continued to cover the plaintiffs’ case as their lawyers called expert witnesses from the fields of biology and chemistry in an attempt to demonstrate the solid foundation on which evolutionary theory rested. The second part of their strategy was to show the strong link between intelligent design and creation science, which courts had banned from public schools nationwide in 1987.

Lebo found the scientific testimony fascinating, but witnessed the most dramatic moment of the trial on Wednesday, October 7, 2005. That day, Barbara Forrest, a professor of philosophy at Southeastern Louisiana University, took the stand as a witness for the plaintiffs. In her testimony, she traced the roots of intelligent design theory not to the biblical creation story but to the Gospel of John, which states: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Forrest cited a 1999 article in the Christian magazine Touchstone in which leading intelligent design theorist William Dembski had been interviewed. Dembski had said: “Intelligent design is just the Logos theology of John’s Gospel restated in the idiom of information theory.” [4]

Forrest also presented evidence that the intelligent design textbook *Of Pandas and People* had in early drafts been a creationist textbook. The wording of the intelligent design version of the textbook was almost exactly the same as in earlier versions, except that the words “intelligent design” had been substituted for “creationism,” and “design proponents” for “creationists.” The switch had taken place almost immediately after the *Edwards v. Aguillard* decision banned creation science from public schools. Forrest read from the 1986 version of the book:

Creation means that the various forms of life began abruptly through the agency of an intelligent creator with their distinctive features already intact—fish with fins and scales, birds with feathers, beaks, and wings, etc.

She compared that to versions published in 1989 and 1993, which said instead:

Intelligent design means that various forms of life began abruptly through an intelligent agency, with their distinctive features already intact—fish with fins and scales, birds with feathers, beaks, and wings, etc. [5]

She revealed further that the textbook’s publishers, the Texas-based Foundation for Thought and Ethics, had performed an incomplete substitution in an early draft—in one instance writing “cdesign proponentsists,” a mistaken combination of “creationists” and “design proponents.” Lebo chronicled her testimony in detail.

[1] Lauri Lebo and Joseph Maldonado, “Dover curriculum move likely a first; Even some supporters of intelligent design suggest the board might have overstepped,” *York Daily Record* , October 20, 2004.

[2] Lauri Lebo, “Poll: ID matters to Dover voters; A survey found intelligent design would influence a majority of voters,” *York Daily Record* , January 28, 2005.

[3] Lauri Lebo, “Dover’s test begins; as the trial got underway, a scientist testified intelligent design is dangerous,” *York Daily Record* , September 27, 2005.

[4] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 138.

[5] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 140.

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The trial: The defense

Since Lebo was reporting on the day-to-day events of the trial, and the first week was devoted to the plaintiffs' case, the question of balance never arose. Neither Lebo nor her editors felt that she needed to temper arguments favoring evolution with arguments favoring intelligent design. Those would come later.

An image of bacterial flagellum.

Courtesy National Science Foundation

On Tuesday, October 18, Lehigh University microbiologist Michael Behe, one of the founding intellectual fathers of the intelligent design movement, took the stand for the defense. He explained that intelligent design proponents inferred design from the "purposeful arrangement of parts" in biology; that living things and their parts seemed to have been planned with intent. As an example, he cited the bacterial flagellum, whose

tail rotates by means of a motor-like structure at its base. Behe argued that this motor required 30 to 40 protein parts to function, and that the removal of any one of them would render the structure useless—in particular, none of the proteins on their own conferred survival advantages that favored their reproduction. Thus, a series of incremental steps as proposed by Darwin could not explain the structure, which must have appeared fully formed.

Michael Behe.
Courtesy The Maine Campus Online

Behe had written a book about intelligent design, *Darwin's Black Box*, in which he argued that "intelligent design theory focuses exclusively on proposed mechanisms of how complex biological structures arose." Referring to this claim, plaintiffs' attorney Eric Rothschild asked Behe under cross-examination: "Please describe the mechanism that intelligent design proposes for how complex biological structures arose."

Lebo watched as Rothschild repeated the question several times and Behe, in Lebo's estimation, used the kind of vague and confusing language she remembered from her earlier reporting on intelligent design. Lebo thought he was dodging a question about which she too had long been curious. Biologists had explained to her satisfaction how evolution worked—through natural selection. But how did intelligent design work? Behe finally replied to Rothschild:

[Intelligent design] does not propose a mechanism in the sense of a step-by-step description of how those structures arose. But it can infer that in the mechanism, in the process by which these structures arose, an intelligent cause was involved. [1]

Lebo thought this moment represented another significant victory for the plaintiffs, and that the defense's case was so far unimpressive. She returned to the *Daily Record*'s offices that evening to write her story on the day's events. She began with what she felt was the most important event of the day:

One of intelligent design's leading experts could not identify the driving force behind the concept. In his writings supporting intelligent design, Michael Behe, a Lehigh University biochemistry professor and author of *"Darwin's Black Box,"* said that "intelligent design theory focuses exclusively on proposed mechanisms of how complex biological structures arose." But during cross examination Tuesday, when plaintiffs' attorney Eric Rothschild asked Behe to identify those mechanisms, he couldn't. [2]

Lebo knew her editors had not been entirely happy with her coverage of the trial so far. She suspected that she had enjoyed relative editorial freedom because the first half focused on the plaintiffs. Now that the defense—that is, the pro-intelligent design side—was presenting its case, editors probably expected her to present that side the same way she had presented the plaintiffs'—with a heavy focus on the strengths of their case. But, as she recalled later, she felt that plaintiffs' attorney Rothschild had

“eviscerated” the defense in cross-examination. [3] She did not want to impose a false sense of balance on her article; at the same time, she wanted to be fair to the legal process in which both sides did get an equal chance to present their views. Did she owe the defense the same benefit of the doubt that the judge in the case did? Should she approach her court reporting differently from her science reporting?

[1] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 155.

[2] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 157.

[3] Lauri Lebo, *The Devil in Dover* , p. 158.

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2,178 Occult Books Now Digitized & Put Online, Thanks to the Ritman Library and Da Vinci Code Author Dan Brown
in Books, History, Libraries | August 14th, 2025 2 Comments

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In 2018 we brought you some exciting news. Thanks to a generous donation from Da Vinci Code author Dan Brown, Amsterdam’s Ritman Library—a sizable collection of pre-1900 books on alchemy, astrology, magic, and other occult subjects—has been digitizing thousands of its rare texts under a digital education project cheekily called “Hermetically Open.” We are now pleased to report that the first 2,178 books from the Ritman project have come available in their online reading room.

Visitors should be aware that these books are written in several different European languages. Latin, the scholarly language of Europe throughout the Medieval and Early Modern periods, predominates, and it’s a peculiar Latin at that, laden with jargon and alchemical terminology. Other books appear in German, Dutch, and French. Readers of some or all of these languages will of course have an easier time than monolingual English speakers, but there is still much to offer those visitors as well.

In addition to the pleasure of paging through an old rare book, even virtually, English speakers can quickly find a collection of readable books by clicking on the “Place of Publication” search filter and selecting Cambridge or London, from which come such notable works as *The Man-Mouse Taken in a Trap, and tortured to death for gnawing the Margins of Eugenius Philalethes*, by Thomas Vaughan, published in 1650.

The language is archaic—full of quirky spellings and uses of the “long s”—and the content is bizarre. Those familiar with this type of writing, whether through historical study or the work of more recent interpreters like Aleister Crowley or Madame Blavatsky, will recognize the many formulas: The tracing of magical correspondences between flora, fauna, and astronomical phenomena; the careful parsing of names; astrology and lengthy linguistic etymologies; numerological discourses and philosophical poetry; early psychology and personality typing; cryptic, coded mythology and medical procedures. Although we’ve grown accustomed through popular media to thinking of magical books as cookbooks, full of recipes and incantations, the reality is far different.

Encountering the vast and strange treasures in the online library, one thinks of the type of the magician represented in Goethe’s *Faust*, holed up in his study,

Where even the welcome daylight strains
But duskily through the painted panes.
Hemmed in by many a toppling heap
Of books worm-eaten, gray with dust,
Which to the vaulted ceiling creep

The library doesn’t only contain occult books. Like the weary scholar Faust, alchemists of old “studied now Philosophy / And Jurisprudence, Medicine,— / And even, alas! Theology.” Click on Cambridge as the place of publication and you’ll find the work above by Henry More, “one of the celebrated ‘Cambridge Platonists,’” the Linda Hall Library notes, “who flourished in mid-17th-century and did their best to reconcile Plato with Christianity and the mechanical philosophy that was beginning to make inroads into British natural philosophy.” Those who study European intellectual history know well that More’s presence in this collection is no anomaly. For a few hundred years, it was difficult, if not impossible, to separate the pursuits of theology, philosophy, medicine, and science (or “natural philosophy”) from those of alchemy and astrology. (Isaac Newton is a famous example of a mathematician/scientist/alchemist/believer in strange apocalyptic predictions.) Enter the Ritman’s new digital collection of occult texts [here](#).

Note: An earlier version of this post appeared on our site in 2018.

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Steve the Dragon says:

August 15, 2025 at 2:27 pm

Uh oh... StyxHexenHammer666 just felt a great disturbance in the Force, as if thousands of occult PDFs suddenly cried out... and then were downloaded for free.

Reply

Terry in Thailand says:

August 16, 2025 at 1:56 am

I wonder if ancient texts in Asia are preserved by digitization. There are magazine, newsletter and newspaper articles that at times have paranormal content.

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Honourable Theft
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How one young woman broke down the gates of knowledge

By George Monbiot, published in the Guardian 13th September 2018

Never underestimate the power of one determined person. What Carole Cadwalladr has done to Facebook and Big Data and Edward Snowden has done to the state security complex, the young Kazakhstani scientist Alexandra Elbakyan has done to the multi-billion dollar industry that traps knowledge behind paywalls. Her pirate web scraper service, Sci-hub, has done more than any government to tackle one of the biggest rip-offs of the modern era: the capture of research that should belong to us all.

Everyone should be free to learn; knowledge should be disseminated as widely as possible. No one would publicly disagree with these sentiments. Yet governments and universities have allowed the big academic publishers to deny these rights. Academic publishing might sound like an obscure and fusty affair, but it uses one of the most ruthless and profitable business models of any industry.

The model was pioneered by the notorious conman Robert Maxwell. He realised that, because scientists need to be informed about all significant developments in their field, every journal that publishes academic papers can establish a monopoly, and can charge outrageous fees for the transmission of knowledge. He called his discovery “a perpetual financing machine”.

He also realised that he could capture other people’s labour and resources for nothing. Governments funded the research published by his company, Pergamon, while the scientists who wrote the articles, reviewed them and edited the journals did so for free. His business model relied on the enclosure of common and public resources. Or, to use the technical term, daylight robbery.

As his other ventures ran into trouble, he sold his company to the Dutch publishing giant Elsevier. Like its major rivals, it has sustained the model to this day, and continues to make spectacular profits. Half the world’s research is published by five companies: Reed-Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley-Blackwell and the American Chemical Society. Libraries must pay a fortune for their bundled journals, while those outside the university system are asked to pay \$20, \$30, sometimes \$50 to read a single article.

While open access journals have grown rapidly, researchers still have to read the paywalled articles in commercial journals. And, because their work is assessed by those who might fund, reward or promote them according to the impact factor of the journals

in which they publish, many feel they have no choice but to surrender their research to these companies as well. Science ministers come and go without saying a word about this scam.

After my cancer diagnosis earlier this year, I was offered a choice of treatments. I wanted to make an informed decision. This meant reading scientific papers. Had I not used the stolen material provided by Sci-hub, it would have cost me thousands. Because, like most people, I didn't have this money, I would have given up before I was properly informed. I have never met Alexandra Elbakyan, and I can only speculate about alternative outcomes, had the research I read not swayed my decision. But it is possible that she has saved my life.

Like people in many countries where scholarship is poorly funded, Elbakyan discovered that she could not complete her neuroscience research without pirated articles. Outraged by the journals' padlock on knowledge, she used her hacking skills to share papers more widely. Sci-hub allows free access to 70 million papers, otherwise locked behind paywalls.

She was sued in 2015 by Elsevier, which won \$15 million in damages, and in 2017 by the American Chemical Society, resulting in a \$4.8 million judgement. These were civil cases, concerning civil matters. While the US courts have characterised her activities as copyright violation and data theft, to me her work involves the restoration to the public realm of property that belongs to us and for which we have already paid. In the great majority of cases, the research carried in these journals has been funded by taxpayers. Most of the work involved in writing the papers, reviewing and editing them is carried out at public expense, by people working at universities. Yet this public asset has been captured, packaged, and sold back to us for phenomenal fees. Those who must pay most are publicly-funded libraries. Taxpayers must shell out twice: first for the research, then to see the results. There might be legal justifications for this practice. There are no ethical justifications.

In any case, wherever Alexandra Elbakyan is (she lives in hiding), she is beyond the jurisdiction of the US courts. She moves Sci-hub between domains as it gets taken down. The numerous attempts to intimidate her have failed. One woman, with a small amount of crowdfunding, has smashed the wall erected by a \$19 billion industry.

Of course, she is by no means the only person to have challenged the big publishers. The Public Library of Science, founded by researchers who objected not only to the industry's denial of public access but also its slow, antiquated and clumsy modes of publishing that hold back scientific research, has demonstrated that you don't need pay walls to produce excellent journals. Advocates like Stevan Harnad, Bjorn Brembs, Peter Suber and Michael Eisen have changed the public mood. The brilliant online innovator Aaron Swartz sought to release 5 million scientific articles into the public domain. Facing the possibility of decades in a US federal prison for this selfless act, he killed himself.

Among Alexandra Elbakyan's achievements is to empower libraries to confront the big

publishers. Now they can refuse to renew contracts with the companies that had them over a barrel, as their users have another means of getting past the paywall. As the system has begun to creak, government funding agencies have at last summoned the courage to do what they should have done decades ago, and demand the democratisation of knowledge.

Last week, a consortium of European funders, including major research agencies in the UK, France, the Netherlands and Italy, published their “Plan S”. It insists that from 2020 research we have already paid for through our taxes will no longer be locked up. Any researcher receiving money from these funders must publish her or his work only in open access journals.

The publishers have gone ballistic. Springer Nature argues that this plan “potentially undermines the whole research publishing system.” Yes, that’s the point. The publishers of the Science series, who appear to live in a Trumpian world in which reality is inverted and syntax is mangled, maintain that it would “disrupt scholarly communications, be a disservice to researchers, and impinge academic freedom”. Elsevier says “If you think information shouldn’t cost anything, go to Wikipedia”, inadvertently reminding us of what happened to the commercial encyclopedias.

Plan S is not perfect, and the death of the knowledge monopolists has been predicted before. But this should be the beginning of the end of Maxwell’s outrageous legacy. In the meantime, as a matter of principle, do not pay a penny to read an academic article. The ethical choice is to read the stolen material published by Sci-hub.

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"Hoodoo - Conjuraton -
Witchcraft - Rootwork"
by
HARRY MIDDLETON HYATT

Harry Middleton Hyatt was an Anglican minister who collected folklore as a hobby. Raised in Quincy, Illinois, Hyatt received his M.A. and D.D. at Kenyon College and Oxford University. He served as assistant rector at the Church of the Holy Spirit in New York City from 1951 to 1965. After his retirement in 1965, he returned to his home-town of Quincy, Illinois.

As a folklorist, Hyatt began this work in his own home-town, and then proceeded onward to collect magical spells throughout the South. His two major works in this field were "Folklore From Adams County Illinois" (1935) and "Hoodoo - Conjuraton - Witchcraft - Rootwork" (1970). In addition, Hyatt was also a genealogist who published two books on his own family, "The Millers of Millersburg Kentucky" (1929) and "Descendents of John Walton of Baltimore Co. Maryland and Harrison Co. Kentucky" (1950).

The bulk of the Hyatt collection is currently archived at the UCLA Center for the Comparative Study of Folklore and Mythology and in the Quincy [Illinois] University Department of Special Collections.

"FOLKLORE FROM ADAMS COUNTY ILLINOIS"

"Folklore From Adams County Illinois" (FACI) contains hundreds of simple spells, folk-magical beliefs, herb-based medical remedies, riddling rhymes, and folkloric tales. It consists of 10,949 entries on 723 pages, including an index. It was self-published by Hyatt in two editions, the first in 1935, and the second in 1965. Both editions were released under the imprint "Memoirs of the Alma C. Hyatt Foundation." Alma C. Hyatt was his wife. The second edition contains a lengthy illustrated appreciation of the then-late Alma Hyatt, in which Mr. Hyatt explains to the world what an inspiration she was to him.

The section of "Folklore From Adams County Illinois" that deals with witchcraft is the most useful part of the book. It is comprised of brief quotes from unnamed local folks to whom Hyatt assigned cultural ascriptions (e.g. "Irish," "German," "Negro," etc.) so that one can place the speakers in the traditions from which they come. Unfortunately, as Hyatt explains in his preface, the material was edited and "omission of Negro dialect means that colored folk speak the same language as their white neighbors" with the exception of "a small vocabulary peculiar to themselves [of which] examples occur frequently in the text." Even more inexplicably, all "lore definitely Jewish was excluded [and] the same is true of three or four Indian [Native American] sayings." Furthermore, Greeks and Italians living in the area, according to Hyatt, "are newcomers, and have not been approached for folk-lore." Such egregious editorial deletions blemish what would otherwise be a balanced representation of folk-magical practices in Illinois at that time, but if one keeps these exclusions in mind, "Folklore From Adams County Illinois" is still a valuable document. The lengthy section on African-American hoodoo spells, and the unique quality of these spells, is what led Hyatt to undertake his later, more massive, work of hoodoo folk-magic collection in the South.

I am often asked what the differences are between the 1935 and 1965 editions of "Folklore from Adams County Illinois" (FACI). Basically -- they are different, period. The 1935 edition is easier to read (it is a typeset octavo volume), but the 1965 edition is MASSIVE -- presented in typewriter type, like the later "Hoodoo - Conjuraton - Witchcraft - Rootwork" books, and matching them in size and binding. Additionally, the 1965 FACI is the only place where you can learn more about Hyatt himself -- for it contains a section printed on glossy paper in which he describes his life and his relationship with his wife Alma, who was his muse and financial supporter throughout his long years of dedicated folklore collecting.

The other question often asked is "Why do i need to read FACI when it is not about hoodoo?"

False premise!

A great deal of FACI is in fact about hoodoo.

FACI represents the largest attempt ever to catalogue ALL the beliefs of ALL the people living in one region (Adams County Illinois, like the title says). There are oversights --

Hyatt refused to collect material from Jews or Native Americans, for reasons that defy rationality at this point -- but there were plenty of black people in Adams County, and Hyatt collected all of their hoodoo beliefs, spells, and practices in FACI, and labelled them "Negro" for ease of extraction by researchers.

It was Hyatt's realization that Negro magical beliefs differed greatly from his own English American culture's beliefs that led him to go South and work on "Hoodoo - Conjuraton - Witchcraft - Rootwork", the largest collection of folklore from one cultural group in America.

But FACI is not only important because it served as Hyatt's introduction to hoodoo -- it is also the most thorough and factual record of Irish, English, German, and other white European magical beliefs in America ever assembled, and, as such, it deserves a place on the shelf of any American Neo-Pagan, Wiccan, Fam-Trad or Pow Wow Magic practitioner.

"HOODOO - CONJURATION - WITCHCRAFT - ROOTWORK"

"Hoodoo - Conjuraton - Witchcraft - Rootwork" (HCWR) is a 5-volume, 4766-page collection of folkloric material gathered by Hyatt in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia between 1936 and 1940. Supplementary interviews were conducted in Florida in 1970.

The "Hoodoo" collection consists of 13,458 separate magic spells and folkloric beliefs, plus lengthy interviews with professional root doctors, conjures, and hoodoos. All but one of Hyatt's 1600 informants were African-Americans, but several narrations by European-Americans (collected for his earlier book, "Folklore From Adams County, Illinois") were also included. Hyatt recorded the material on Edison cylinders and a device called a Telediphone, often without the full knowledge of the participants. He then transcribed and annotated it for publication. Occasionally his equipment failed or was not available and he took hand-written notes instead. The 1930s field recordings have since been destroyed, with the exception of a few cylinders that Hyatt had pressed onto 78 rpm records. The Florida interviews of 1970, recorded on cassette tapes, have survived.

As if to overcome the ham-fisted linguistic editing of Negro dialect that marred "Folklore From Adams County Illinois," this time Hyatt transcribed the speech of his informants semi-phonetically. What may look to modern eyes like "racial stereotyping" or making fun of Southerners was actually his sincere attempt to catalogue variant regional pronunciations. If you read several spells, you will see that he did NOT impose upon his informants one single stereotyped "black dialect" or "Southern dialect" but in fact conveyed, as accurately as he could, the true sound of each person's speech. Reading the spells aloud and noting the location where each informant lived will help you comprehend this. I do not intend to apologize for Hyatt's technique, and i hope that future scholars will not do so either.

The publication of this material was accomplished between 1970 and 1978, again under the imprint "Memoirs of the Alma C. Hyatt Foundation." The first two volumes were issued as a set in 1970, and said to be complete, but then, after a few years, three more volumes were released. Hyatt died before the sixth volume, an index, was prepared.

The contents of "Hoodoo - Conjuraton - Witchcraft - Rootwork" are about as follows (numbers in parentheses are page number):

Volume One:

introduction (i - xliii)

general description of beliefs (1-19)

belief in spirits, ghosts, the Devil, and the like (19 -164)

how rootworkers operate; testimony from laymen (165 - 217)

comparisons between medical doctors and root doctors (217 - 269)

typical methods used by root doctors (269 - 349)

timing of spells and recurrence of the effects of spells over time (349 - 361)

folk medicine: principles of healing (361 - 410)

folk medicine: alphabetical list of ingredients (410 - 519)

mojo hands grouped somewhat alphabetically according to their major ingredient (e.g. buckeye nuts, needles, black cat bone, salt, sulphur) (519 - 669)

spells for business luck grouped somewhat alphabetically according to their major ingredient (669 - 744)

shrines: altars (primarily New Orleans) (744 - 797)

shrines: candles (primarily New Orleans) (797 - 862)

shrines: saints (primarily New Orleans) (862 - 888)

more layman testimonies (888 - 931)

Volume Two:

map of fieldwork (932)

lengthy interviews with professional root doctors (933 - 1843)

documentary material, correspondence, etc. (1843 - 1844)

Volume Three:

more interviews with root doctors (1844 - 2339)

conjure work utilising human body parts and waste

sexual fluids, sex magic, and impotence (2341 - 2509)

blood ("everyday blood" and "her private time") (2509 - 2540)

urine (2540 - 2618)

excrement (2618 - 2636)

sweat (2636 - 2781)

Volume Four:

more conjure work utilising human body parts and waste

sweat, clothes, shoes, and foot tracks
hair
fingernails, toenails, and foot skin
systemic body ailments:
"live things in you"
cures for disease
alcoholism
to keep persons asleep
a few more interviews with root doctors
murder: how a murderer can escape
murder: how a murderer can be caught
death, burial, and graveyard dirt
body substitutes: photographs
body substitutes: names and hand-written letters
court cases (theft?)
more about candles (continued from Volume One)
hens' eggs
salt and its combinations
red pepper and its combinations (excluding salt)
various notes and interviews
Volume Five:

more salt (continued from Volume Four)
more nails, needles, pins, and tacks (continued from Volume One)
more frogs and toads (continued from Volume One)
more black cat bone material (continued from Volume One);
one more interview with a root doctor
the Florida fieldwork of 1970, grouped alphabetically by major ingredient
"odds and ends" (mostly procedural)
Volume Six:

the index, was in preparation when Hyatt died and it was never released, leading to the frustrating condition of the material as it now stands. However, as i use extracts from Hyatt's material in my own work, i create html cross-links between pages. This will, in effect, help generate an indexed database. In addition, i have placed online an index to the names and residential locations of Hyatt's informants, for the convenience of people interested in the broader areas of African-American genealogy and material culture during the 1930s.

MY DEBT TO HARRY M. HYATT

Like almost everyone who has followed in Hyatt's shoes, i owe him a debt for his dedication and perseverance in collecting so much magical lore and making it available to all. Although i began my own research into hoodoo in the early 1960s, before the reprint of FACI or the first volumes of HCWR were published, i found Hyatt's work invaluable from the time i first read it. I have made some use of his material to bolster

my own presentations, and, for those who are interested, here is a list of Hoodoo in Theory and Practice web pages that contain quoted passages from Harry Hyatt's research:

Aunt Caroline Dye of Newport, Arkansas
Bluestone and Mexican Blue Anil Balls
Body Fluids: Menstrual Blood, Urine, Semen
Crossroads Rituals
Devil's Shoestring
Foot Track Magic
Goofer Dust
Hoodoo History and Definition of Terms
Hoyt's Cologne
Hyatt's African-American informants
Madam Myrtle Collins of Memphis, Tennessee
Nation Sack
Protection Spells
Salt
Secrets of the Psalms
Silver Dimes

As you run across Hyatt material at this site, please note:

- 1) All the transcribed spells quoted in Hoodoo in Theory and Practice are from the 1936-1940 "Hoodoo" sessions unless otherwise noted.
- 2) The number at the beginning, if any, is Hyatt's spell number. (Interviews were not numbered.)
- 3) Code numbers at the end of a spell are Hyatt's identification of the informants and the number of the recording cylinder itself.
- 4) Any words in (parentheses) in the text were spoken aloud by Hyatt during the interviews and any words in [brackets] were his written commentary to the publication. MY OWN further comments, if any, appear in {italics in curly brackets}, and most of them consist of additional information or corrections to Hyatt's characteristic transcription errors (e.g. his invariable mis-transcription of Hoyt's Cologne as "Hearts Cologne" or "herts perfume").
- 5) I have occasionally broken some of the book's run-on paragraphs into shorter chunks, for easier reading.

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You can search our sites for a single word (like archaeoastronomy, hoodoo, conjure, or

clitoris), an exact phrase contained within quote marks (like "love spells", "spiritual supplies", "occult shop", "gambling luck", "Lucky Mojo bag", or "guardian angel"), or a name within quote marks (like "Blind Willie McTell", "Black Hawk", "Hoyt's Cologne", or "Frank Stokes"):

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Hoodoo Herb and Root Magic by cat yronwode:a materia magica of African-American
conjure
Lucky W Amulet Archive by cat yronwode: an online museum of worldwide talismans
and charms
Sacred Sex: essays and articles on tantra yoga, neo-tantra, karezza, sex magic, and
sex worship
Sacred Landscape: essays and articles on archaeoastronomy and sacred geometry
Freemasonry for Women by cat yronwode: a history of mixed-gender Freemasonic
lodges
The Lucky Mojo Esoteric Archive: captured internet text files on occult and spiritual
topics
Lucky Mojo Usenet FAQ Archive:FAQs and REFs for occult and magical usenet
newsgroups
Aleister Crowley Text Archive: a multitude of texts by an early 20th century occultist

Lucky Mojo Magic Spells Archives: love spells, money spells, luck spells, protection spells, and more

Free Love Spell Archive: love spells, attraction spells, sex magick, romance spells, and lust spells

Free Money Spell Archive: money spells, prosperity spells, and wealth spells for job and business

Free Protection Spell Archive: protection spells against witchcraft, jinxes, hexes, and the evil eye

Free Gambling Luck Spell Archive: lucky gambling spells for the lottery, casinos, and races

POPULAR CULTURE

Hoodoo and Blues Lyrics: transcriptions of blues songs about African-American folk magic

EaRhEaD!'S Syd Barrett Lyrics Site: lyrics by the founder of the Pink Floyd Sound

The Lesser Book of the Vishanti: Dr. Strange Comics as a magical system, by cat yronwode

The Spirit Checklist: a 1940s newspaper comic book by Will Eisner, indexed by cat yronwode

Fit to Print: collected weekly columns about comics and pop culture by cat yronwode

Eclipse Comics Index: a list of all Eclipse comics, albums, and trading cards

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Hoodoo Rootwork Correspondence Course with cat yronwode: 52 weekly lessons in book form

Hoodoo Conjure Training Workshops: hands-on rootwork classes, lectures, and seminars

Apprentice with catherine yronwode: personal 3-week training for qualified HRCC graduates

Lucky Mojo Community Forum: an online message board for our occult spiritual shop customers

Lucky Mojo Hoodoo Rootwork Hour Radio Show: learn free magic spells via podcast download

Lucky Mojo Videos: see video tours of the Lucky Mojo shop and get a glimpse of the spirit train

Lucky Mojo Publishing: practical spell books on world-wide folk magic and divination

Lucky Mojo Newsletter Archive: subscribe and receive discount coupons and free magick spells

LMC Radio Network: magical news, information, education, and entertainment for all!

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The Lucky Mojo Curio Co.: spiritual supplies for hoodoo, magick, witchcraft, and conjure

Herb Magic: complete line of Lucky Mojo Herbs, Minerals, and Zoological Curios, with sample spells

Mystic Tea Room Gift Shop: antique, vintage, and contemporary fortune telling tea cups

PERSONAL SITES

catherine yronwode: the eclectic and eccentric author of many of the above web pages

nagasiva yronwode: nigris (333), nocTifer, lorax666, boboroshi, Troll Towelhead, !

Garden of Joy Blues: former 80 acre hippie commune near Birch Tree in the Missouri Ozarks

Liselotte Erlanger Glozer: illustrated articles on collectible vintage postcards

Jackie Payne: Shades of Blues: a San Francisco Bay Area blues singer

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OTHER SITES OF INTEREST

Arcane Archive: thousands of archived Usenet posts on religion, magic, spell-casting, mysticism, and spirituality

Association of Independent Readers and Rootworkers: psychic reading, conjure, and hoodoo root doctor services

Candles and Curios: essays and articles on traditional African American conjure and folk magic, plus shopping

Crystal Silence League: a non-denominational site; post your prayers; pray for others; let others pray for you

Gospel of Satan: the story of Jesus and the angels, from the perspective of the God of this World

Hoodoo Psychics: connect online or call 1-888-4-HOODOO for instant readings now from a member of AIRR

Missionary Independent Spiritual Church: spirit-led, inter-faith; prayer-light services; Smallest Church in the World

Mystic Tea Room: tea leaf reading, teacup divination, and a museum of antique fortune telling cups

Satan Service: an archive presenting the theory, practice, and history of Satanism and Satanists

Southern Spirits: 19th and 20th century accounts of hoodoo, including ex-slave narratives & interviews

Spiritual Spells: lessons in folk magic and spell casting from an eclectic Wiccan perspective, plus shopping

Yronwode Home: personal pages of catherine yronwode and nagasiva yronwode, magical archivists

Yronwode Institution: the Yronwode Institution for the Preservation and Popularization of Indigenous Ethnomagicology

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Warning about /r/psychic - mod weirdness regarding how to identify frauds
meta

I feel like this and other communities should know about this. During a question there Where does one find a good psychic, I posted comments linking to a long-form article on how cold-reading works, and how to spot if you're being subject to someone well versed in this stage-magic form.

I also linked that there was also recently a PSA here about 'not buying demon pact spells for \$9000'. Similar idea, since a lot of cold-reader types will also sell spells to fix the ailments they 'discover' during your cold-read.

The fishy part: multiple times, mods silently removed my posts with no explanation. Reaching out also lead to no responses as to why.

You can see one of them via reveddit.

After conveying with dear witchy and occult friends about this, we had the idea that perhaps mods of r/psychic are doing cold reading tactics, and removal of this post was so others couldn't learn to be informed of these types of fraudulent actions.

There's something definitely "weird" about this situation. So, at least, this can be a warning to be aware.

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I'd download this 45 GB torrent of occult materials

(an even larger occult torrent at 480GB is

<https://1337x.to/torrent/3800017/The-Occult-Library-v1-5-480GB/> , but the above one is plenty suitable.... unless you're hunting down very narrow works that aren't available

anywhere else.)

And then, I would start reading them. It'll be slow. You'll find areas that pique your interest. And others will make you uninterested. Write down your experiences as you learn.

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3y ago

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I feel like this and other communities should know about this. During a question there Where does one find a good psychic, I posted comments linking to a long-form article on how cold-reading works, and how to spot if you're being subject to someone well versed in this stage-magic form.

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(an even larger occult torrent at 480GB is

<https://1337x.to/torrent/3800017/The-Occult-Library-v1-5-480GB/> , but the above one is plenty suitable.... unless you're hunting down very narrow works that aren't available anywhere else.)

And then, I would start reading them. It'll be slow. You'll find areas that pique your interest. And others will make you uninterested. Write down your experiences as you learn.

Some paths will have practices you can try. As you are comfortable with them, try them. Also write down your experiences here. Some may be very uncomfortable - like meditation can have some disturbing imagery.

This is a path that will likely take you 1-3 years to accomplish. And by then, you'll have a respectable understanding of many occultic systems, basics of how they work, their histories, and what paths you wish to work with.

Upvote

2

Downvote

Reply

u/mirta000 avatar

mirta000

•

3y ago

Likely because the mods have something to sell.

I've didn't get accepted into some places for my "anti-capitalist" views too.

Upvote

9

Downvote

Reply

Sahaquiel_9

•

3y ago

r/sorceryofthespectacle

Upvote

2

Downvote

Reply

nytshaed512

•

3y ago

I get irritated when people message me about "I have a message for you", typically it's a dm. I play along and let it draw out, just to see what they want. As they continue, I catch on that it's bs. "I need to tell you about this generational curse." 🙄🙄

Then I tell them to go away, because I'm the only witch in my family and I know how to do my own readings tyvm. Then they leave me alone. There were quite a few recently, and I ignored them.

Upvote

4

Downvote

Reply

ilmystex

•

3y ago

I thought it was bizarre that the group lets people post their ads because it seems to be

a strict no-go for most related groups. I feel like I'm just gonna leave that sub. Thank you!

Upvote
3

Downvote

Reply

u/ProfCastwell avatar
ProfCastwell

•

3y ago

From my own experience with gifted people in my life. Legit psychics will never ask you a question. They don't have to.

They may be a little fuzzy trying to describe the information they're receiving. But they won't ask. It will depend on their experience. So you may need to work out what they describe.

One fellow wasn't used to using his ability for a while. And had a hard time conveying info he got from my uncle. Who eventually led him to a turtle tank our friend has. Then I figured out it was my uncle. He couldn't have just guessed why turtles would be significant. When I was a wee kid. I was nearly bitten by a big snapping turtle that had taken up residence in our pond.

But what had me confused for a while, once I knew it was my uncle every clue made perfect sense the fellow could not have guessed, was I think he presumed my uncle was the same color as me. Lol

So I think his presumption affected how he saw my uncle.

But someone with a true gift won't ask or lead you to fill in the blank.

Upvote
2

Downvote

Reply

[deleted]

•

3y ago

This is happening at r/psychicdevelopment as well.

The only people who seem to engage are the ones who seem desperate. Reporting these posts does nothing to have them removed.

As a clairvoyant, I don't need anyone to do my readings for me but apparently lots of people are falling for these scams so yikes to that.

Upvote

16

Downvote

Reply

clow_reed

OP

•

3y ago

The only people who seem to engage are the ones who seem desperate.

Ugh, that is terrible...

I did do some professional (paid) tarot. I had a client whom, after being asked the similar desperation questions, refused further readings of those questions and gave back her money.

I don't mind helping people, but I won't sit back collecting \$\$\$\$ because of what amounts to desperation. Even if they paid someone else for it. I won't be a party to that.

Upvote

10

Downvote

Reply

[deleted]

•

3y ago

Hey man, could you explain how you realized you were clairvoyant? I'm curious if it could apply to me as well.

Upvote

1

Downvote

Reply

[deleted]

•

3y ago

Every single human being on this planet has the potential to unlock their clairvoyant abilities, friend. I'm sure it does apply to you.

I always knew things, felt things, saw things, heard things... but earlier this year, I was given the number of a clairvoyant reader by a friend. I googled her and since she had no online "psychic" presence, just her realtor career stuff, I figured I would book a reading and see what was up.

This lady blew me away. Insane. Never met anyone like her. She knew things that she had no way to know. Specific things. She sent me images of the things she was seeing with her mind. She saw my life, man. She's taken me to the Akashic Records, showed me past lives, helped me clear karma and cut karmic cords. I've never met her in person and we do everything over the phone.

Long story short, I have readings with her on occasion still, but she referred me to the place that she studied clairvoyance and I have been taking classes there. I start my next one tomorrow. Everything has gone fast as hell from that first reading. My abilities are exploding but it takes consistent, daily practice. It is hard. Frustrating at times and has really opened my (third) eye to how arrogant I was about my own abilities. It's been humbling to see how far I have to go still. In January, I start their two year mediumship program. Everything we learn is meditation based. It is very precise and involves very specific exercises done in a specific order. At least that is what I've experienced so far.

If you are interested in a link to the school, message me and I'll hook you up. Too many scammers on here to post in a comment. They teach teleconference classes all over the world. It's pretty neat and, I think, affordable.

If you are also interested, the book "Basic Psychic Development" by Jon Friedlander contains all the exercises I am learning so far.

Upvote

8

Downvote

Reply

BriantologistBaxter

-

3y ago

How much do you think a demon pact is worth? If I were to sell one, \$9,000 seems pretty low considering the risk... not that I would sell or look to buy one.

Upvote

1

Downvote

Reply

u/mirta000 avatar

mirta000

-

3y ago

Hello, Theistic Luciferian here - it is worth nothing. Would you sell a prayer? This is the same thing. Now if the customer offers something on their side, it will be between them and the Infernal Divine, the 3rd party in between can not add anything to said offer. In the end it will be up to Infernal Divine to answer or not, meaning that the person could have cut the 3rd party entirely and simply meditated on a sigil, or chanted an Enn.

Upvote

10

Downvote

Reply

BriantologistBaxter

-

3y ago

Some spirits allow such sales, I hear. It's common in voodoo. I guess if people say its worth it... I knew a guy in Chicago years ago who sold voodoo contracts STARTING at \$10,000 and he was very popular...

Upvote

1

Downvote

Reply

2 more replies

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Anyone have read this BOOK?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

4d ago

Anyone have read this BOOK?

r/occult - Anyone have read this BOOK?

117 upvotes · 14 comments

Do animals have occult traditions?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

6d ago

Do animals have occult traditions?

113 upvotes · 78 comments

The connection between Jesus, Lucifer and Azazel

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

6d ago

The connection between Jesus, Lucifer and Azazel

r/occult - The connection between Jesus, Lucifer and Azazel

113 upvotes · 39 comments

Reading up on GD and I'm confused whether to visualize with my eyes open or closed because the text says close your eyes and the rest of the instructions assume they're open.

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

5d ago

Reading up on GD and I'm confused whether to visualize with my eyes open or closed because the text says close your eyes and the rest of the instructions assume they're open.

r/occult - Reading up on GD and I'm confused whether to visualize with my eyes open or closed because the text says close your eyes and the rest of the instructions assume

they're open.

75 upvotes · 40 comments

My Interpretation of the zones between paths in the Qabalah

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

4d ago

My Interpretation of the zones between paths in the Qabalah

r/occult - My Interpretation of the zones between paths in the Qabalah

62 upvotes · 10 comments

Anyone have read or practiced any ritual from this book ?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

7d ago

Anyone have read or practiced any ritual from this book ?

r/occult - Anyone have read or practiced any ritual from this book ?

57 upvotes · 28 comments

Dream parasite/Nightmare larvae

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

2d ago

Dream parasite/Nightmare larvae

r/occult - Dream parasite/Nightmare larvae

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Seeking occult approaches to steady income

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

4d ago

Seeking occult approaches to steady income

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r/occult

•

3d ago

Beware of group leaders claiming they can identify your soulmate

42 upvotes · 16 comments

Do Neville Goddard's techniques really work, or are they just delusion?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

21h ago

Do Neville Goddard's techniques really work, or are they just delusion?

29 upvotes · 22 comments

Biggest magical project you ever partook in?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

5d ago

Biggest magical project you ever partook in?

29 upvotes · 18 comments

What exactly is hermetic polytheism

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

3d ago

What exactly is hermetic polytheism

28 upvotes · 8 comments

Where did the concept of astral parasites come from?

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2d ago

Where did the concept of astral parasites come from?

27 upvotes · 49 comments

In worshipping God is this the worship of the divine creator exactly or is it the worship of thought forms?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

5d ago

In worshipping God is this the worship of the divine creator exactly or is it the worship of thought forms?

18 upvotes · 101 comments

What If I use multiple magics?

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•

3d ago

What If I use multiple magics?

17 upvotes · 39 comments

Any book suggestions?

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•

5d ago

Any book suggestions?

16 upvotes · 20 comments

72 Guardian Angel Discrepancies

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

2d ago

72 Guardian Angel Discrepancies

13 upvotes · 3 comments

How do you tell the difference between manifesting something and predicting something?

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

3d ago

How do you tell the difference between manifesting something and predicting something?

11 upvotes · 15 comments

Making my own ecelectic path

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

4d ago

Making my own ecelectic path

9 upvotes · 16 comments

Unable to visualize

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

20h ago

Unable to visualize

8 upvotes · 14 comments

Seeking advice on recouping stolen money

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

5d ago

Seeking advice on recouping stolen money

8 upvotes · 15 comments

On Folk Magic/ Nature Magic/ "Kitchen Witch" and so on

r/occult icon

r/occult

•

6d ago

On Folk Magic/ Nature Magic/ "Kitchen Witch" and so on

7 upvotes · 57 comments

Weekly Spirit Praise & Honor Thread

r/occult icon

r/occult

-

6d ago

Weekly Spirit Praise & Honor Thread

7 upvotes · 2 comments

Deconsecrating an Altar

r/occult icon

r/occult

-

3d ago

Deconsecrating an Altar

6 upvotes · 5 comments

Which Solomonic pentacle will help me obtain a job offer?

r/occult icon

r/occult

-

3d ago

Which Solomonic pentacle will help me obtain a job offer?

6 upvotes · 10 comments

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Where does one find a good psychic? : r/Psychic

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Search in r/Psychic

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Expand user menu

r/Psychic icon

Go to Psychic

r/Psychic

-

3y ago

sunkissed3333

Where does one find a good psychic?

Basically the title is my entire question/story. I'll continue writing because I need to push those 100 words out but if someone could let me know how they know how to pick one not being a scammer I'd be forever grateful.

22

.

35

Comments Section

[deleted]

•

3y ago

Well the first thing to know, is that the influx of DM's you're going to get after posting this should probably be ignored. As a sub we recommend not replying to any unsolicited reading offers, as this is how a lot of scammers on the spirituality subs work. No good reader has to reach out for business.

Unfortunately the only way to find the right reader for you is by trial and error. Reviews can be faked, a reader who connects superbly with your best friend may not be able to read you, and cost has no bearing on a readers skills.

Unfortunately scammers are more & more common, you just have to browse this sub and the scammer subs to see it's becoming more & more popular. Just keep your wits about you and think about what you're doing. Think how much information you're giving someone (irl or online) and if you're asked to pay for anything above and beyond your pre-arranged reading fee, walk away. Any upselling of candles, crystals, rocks, spells or cleansing, walk away.

And don't be afraid to speak up if your reading doesn't resonate with you. No reader is 100% accurate 100% of the time - about 75% is good, but remember your reading is only advice. No reading comes with assurances or guarantees. And yes, we can get things wrong! But if you're 10 minutes on and NOTHING is making sense, stop your reader and tell them! A good one wants to know so they can refocus and correct their mistakes, or reschedule if for some reason they aren't connecting with you. Don't wait until the end to say it was rubbish, that just smacks of not wanting to pay.

Finally, we don't allow recommendations, reviews, promotion or advertising on this sub, but we do have a readers request and offer thread, which is exactly as it sounds! And we all readings offered through this sub must be completely free of charge, we don't even allow our readers here to ask for donations, and you're free to request from as many readers as you'd like as often as you'd like!

https://www.reddit.com/r/Psychic/comments/ylwewf/weekly_reading_offer_request_thread/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=ios_app&utm_name=iossmf

Good luck and enjoy

27

u/sunkissed3333 avatar

sunkissed3333

OP

•

3y ago

You're the best! Thank you for your input but mainly thank you for your message.

7

[deleted]

•

3y ago

You're very welcome

3

Quirky_Eye1633

•

3y ago

Well done. You said it all. I am a professional psychic (I am in no way soliciting). I just want to use that to say as someone who is both a client and a reader. There is an over saturation of illegitimate liars and thieves. So many of them ready to take your money. I would mostly stay offline for these services. It's too hard to trust. Myself has looked into brick and mortar stores. Where the psychic has cared enough to actually set up a physical business. You can go in, meet them, feel out their vibe, and schedule (if you like). I have walked in, and quickly out before. I think meeting the person face to face validates the service you should want to expect.

7

Divainthewoods

•

3y ago

Thank you for your info. I've never had a reading, so I've actually been apprehensive about storefront psychics concerned about scamming. I realize scammers are everywhere though. So, how would you suggest someone scope out a psychic storefront to determine if you vibe with the reader? Is it OK to walk in and say your looking for a psychic you feel you have a connection with before scheduling a reading? And is it OK to just walk in without an appointment?

I'd heard about psychic fairs and wondered if that's a good way to find a psychic you like. I've never been to one, so is that too much energy in one place to get a good

reading?

Obviously, I'm not a reader, so that might be an ignorant question. 😊 Some of the kids on 'Psychic Kids' mention being overwhelmed with many spirits reaching out to them, so it seemed plausible.

Thanks to everyone here for all the helpful suggestions!

3

cunmaui808

•

3y ago

Same ways you can make a decision to work with any trusted professional: referrals, research and intuition.

Ask anyone you feel comfortable with asking for recommendations for who they used

Do some due diligence: dig around, interview possible service providers and ask questions about their education, experience and approach

As you do 2/3, trust your vibes and let your own intuition lead you

That's what's helped me.

4

u/Pizzacat247 avatar

Pizzacat247

•

3y ago

It depends on what you are looking for and what kind of reading you want. If you want an in person psychic you can always talk with them first before booking something and see if you like their energy. It may be harder with online ones, but often they have a website or social media account of some form you can look through and get a feel for their overall vibe and style.

You can always look at reviews if they have them but I usually take them with a grain of salt. If you find one you like, and they are in your price range, I think the only way to really know is to try them out. I am somewhat wary of those who charge extremely high or extremely low prices though.

6

Luminary27

•

3y ago

Synchronicities led me to an amazing psychic who changed my life.

I sought one out once before but it wasn't a great experience at all.

I feel like you should follow where your intuition leads you.

4

clow_reed

•

3y ago

You would be better in the long run to develop your own personal gifts.

4

PossibleLifeform889

•

3y ago

It's like finding a decent cop in the United States. They definitely exist but you're gonna go through a LOT of liars trying to find one.

2

1 more reply

Quirky_Eye1633

•

3y ago

Psychic fairs are amazing! I would highly suggest tuning in with your local metaphysical stores. Becoming part of the community is fun, and in my experience I have met some life changing mentors and teachers.

3

Enerologist

•

3y ago

Are you in touch with your guides? If not, start there for best results. They have probably been sending you 11:11s or feathers to catch your attention. When you are ready to see, they will bring you more and more info. Mine brought me EVERY teacher I needed to move along. Be prepared to do your own homework.

Your biggest job at this moment, based on you describing this being a life question, is to observe. Your team knows you are seeking answers. I am telling you, they will show answers to you using symbolism and synchronicities that make sense to you.

If you need a teacher or a medium, one will come to you and you will feel the connection. This will require self control and patience not to over anticipate like I did! 😄

4

u/sunkissed3333 avatar

sunkissed3333

OP

•

3y ago

I honestly don't even know how to start to get in touch with my guides. I've seen angel numbers everywhere most of the days. Yesterday for example I saw 10:10 on the 10th of November. I'm observing, or maybe better to say analyzing, if not over analyzing. But I just can't seem to connect the dots unfortunately.

3

[deleted]

•

3y ago

We've got a few articles in the sub WIKI that might help

https://www.reddit.com/r/Psychic/comments/93vmka/the_complete_guide_to_connecting_with_your_spirit/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=ios_app&utm_name=iossmf

https://www.reddit.com/r/Psychic/comments/93vmka/the_complete_guide_to_connecting_with_your_spirit/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=ios_app&utm_name=iossmf

4

DarlingNib

•

3y ago

Man I feel this

2

[deleted]

•

3y ago

[deleted]

•

3y ago

I've used the best psychic directory site a few times. I've found a few really great legitimate ones on there. If you find one off that site I highly encourage you to read reviews and Google them as well. Also, use your best judgment or intuition and see if it feels right to see them. Good luck.

4

[deleted]

•

3y ago

GtrPlaynFool

-

3y ago

I guess you have your answer already - but it's practically impossible for us to guarantee that you'll find a psychic in your immediate area, not knowing the area, etc. Also wanted to say, you have a psychic within you - perhaps you should think about trying to access Divine guidance in your daily life. All humans have that potential.

2

u/xperth avatar

xperth

-

3y ago

Descend within. Your intuition is the only psychic you'll ever need.

2

keirnangg

-

3y ago

I like to watch a lot of different readers to see and get a better understanding of different interpretations and finding spreads to try and what not. If I get a good feeling and I feel that I need one I'll look into getting a reading from them and go from there.

2

5_meo

-

3y ago

Within

3

More posts you may like

I'm becoming tired of being Psychic

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

-

1mo ago

I'm becoming tired of being Psychic

36 upvotes · 31 comments

I got stopped by a psychic at a store..

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

-

9mo ago

I got stopped by a psychic at a store..

64 upvotes · 65 comments

I went with a friend to see a psychic 28 years ago..

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

•

5mo ago

I went with a friend to see a psychic 28 years ago..

110 upvotes · 54 comments

Anyone know a psychic who's actually been accurate?

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

•

1mo ago

Anyone know a psychic who's actually been accurate?

20 upvotes · 68 comments

I don't want to be a psychic anymore

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

•

21d ago

I don't want to be a psychic anymore

68 upvotes · 71 comments

I ran into a true psychic. She said there is no time. Just space between events? Please explain?

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

•

8mo ago

I ran into a true psychic. She said there is no time. Just space between events? Please explain?

476 upvotes · 121 comments

A psychic told me I'm a psychic

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

•

2y ago

A psychic told me I'm a psychic

32 upvotes · 44 comments

What was the first moment you truly discovered you were psychic?

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

•

4mo ago

What was the first moment you truly discovered you were psychic?

34 upvotes · 34 comments

How Accurate are Psychic Readings

r/Psychic icon

r/Psychic

-

10d ago

How Accurate are Psychic Readings

10 upvotes · 25 comments

Visited a psychic when I was 19. Now middle age and so far all of it has come true.

[r/Psychic icon](#)

[r/Psychic](#)

-

6mo ago

Visited a psychic when I was 19. Now middle age and so far all of it has come true.

578 upvotes · 138 comments

An excellent Psychic on Etsy!

[r/Psychic icon](#)

[r/Psychic](#)

-

4mo ago

An excellent Psychic on Etsy!

12 upvotes · 35 comments

Psychics keep approaching me

[r/Psychic icon](#)

[r/Psychic](#)

-

1y ago

Psychics keep approaching me

29 upvotes · 21 comments

First psychic reading feel terrible - looking for insight

[r/Psychic icon](#)

[r/Psychic](#)

-

10mo ago

First psychic reading feel terrible - looking for insight

15 upvotes · 46 comments

Multiple psychics saying the same thing - will it happen?

[r/Psychic icon](#)

[r/Psychic](#)

-

7mo ago

Multiple psychics saying the same thing - will it happen?

16 upvotes · 26 comments

How do you tell people you are psychic?

[r/Psychic icon](#)

[r/Psychic](#)

-

5mo ago

How do you tell people you are psychic?

27 upvotes · 50 comments

Approached by a psychic at the mall
r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic

•

1y ago
Approached by a psychic at the mall
277 upvotes · 76 comments

TikTok psychics
r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic

•

15d ago
TikTok psychics
16 upvotes · 16 comments

Ever been to a psychic, and the future they told you about never happened?
r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic

•

2y ago
Ever been to a psychic, and the future they told you about never happened?
53 upvotes · 90 comments

Do real psychics actually exist?
r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic

•

2mo ago
Do real psychics actually exist?
39 comments
Are even the most accurate psychics wrong?

r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic

•

2y ago
Are even the most accurate psychics wrong?
40 upvotes · 61 comments
would a psychic be able to advise someone on their career path?

r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic

•

3mo ago
would a psychic be able to advise someone on their career path?
6 upvotes · 17 comments
Visited psychic yesterday and told me something that ruined my perception on
marriages and love...

r/Psychic icon
r/Psychic